

THE STORY OF OUR NAVY

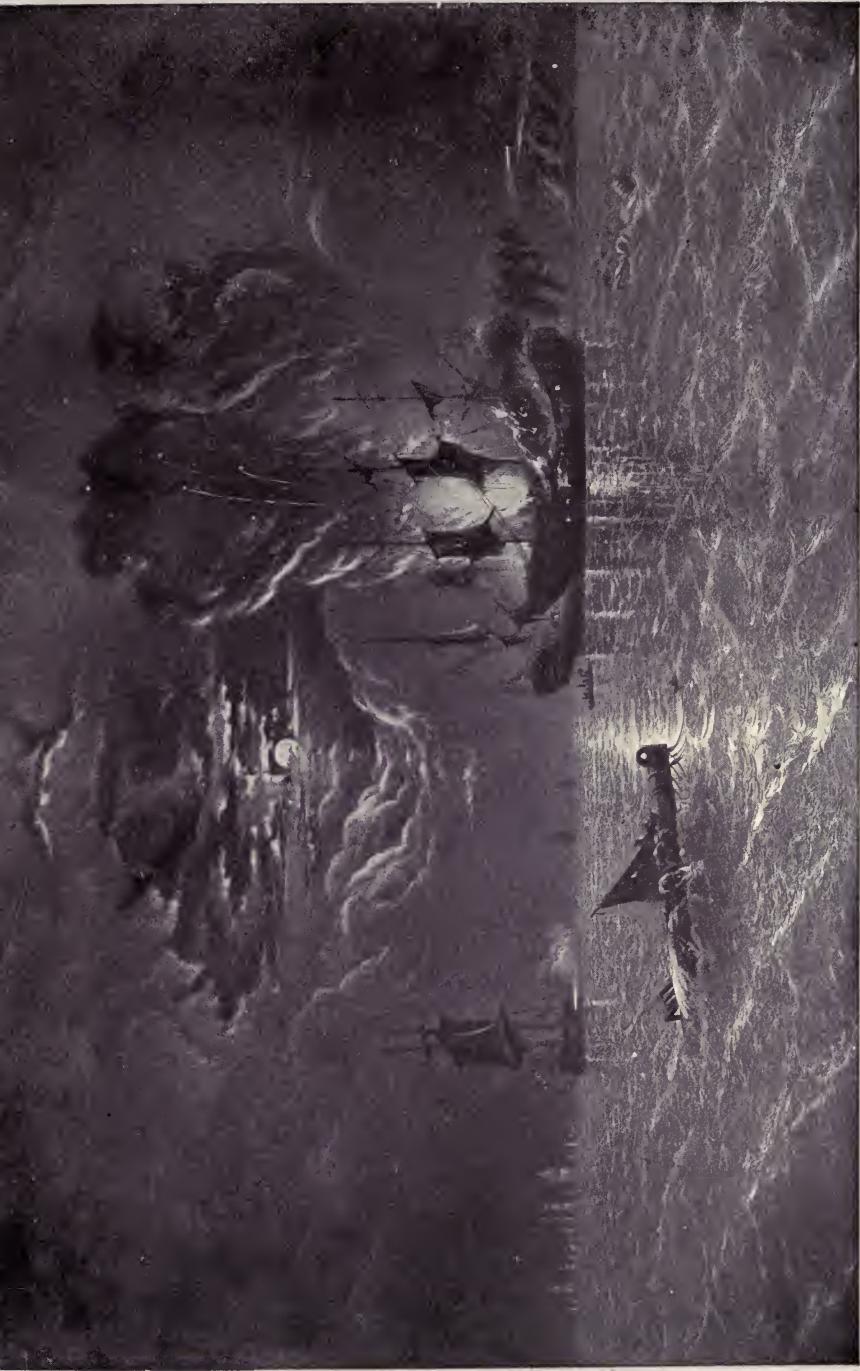
WILLIS J. ABBOT



the mortification of witnessing the failure of his enterprise, after having been within gunshot of the town that he had hoped to capture. As for the good people of Kirkaldy, they were convinced that their escape from the daring seamen was wholly due to the personal influence of their pastor with the Deity; and the worthy parson lived long afterward, ever held in most mighty veneration by the people of his flock.

Disappointed in this plan, Jones continued his cruise. Soon after he fell in with the "Alliance" and the "Vengeance"; and, while off Flamborough Head, the little squadron encountered a fleet of forty-one merchant ships, that, at the sight of the dreaded Yankee cruisers, crowded together like a flock of frightened pigeons, and made all sail for the shore; while two stately men-of-war—the "Serapis, forty-four," and the "Countess of Scarborough, twenty-two"—moved forward to give battle to the Americans.

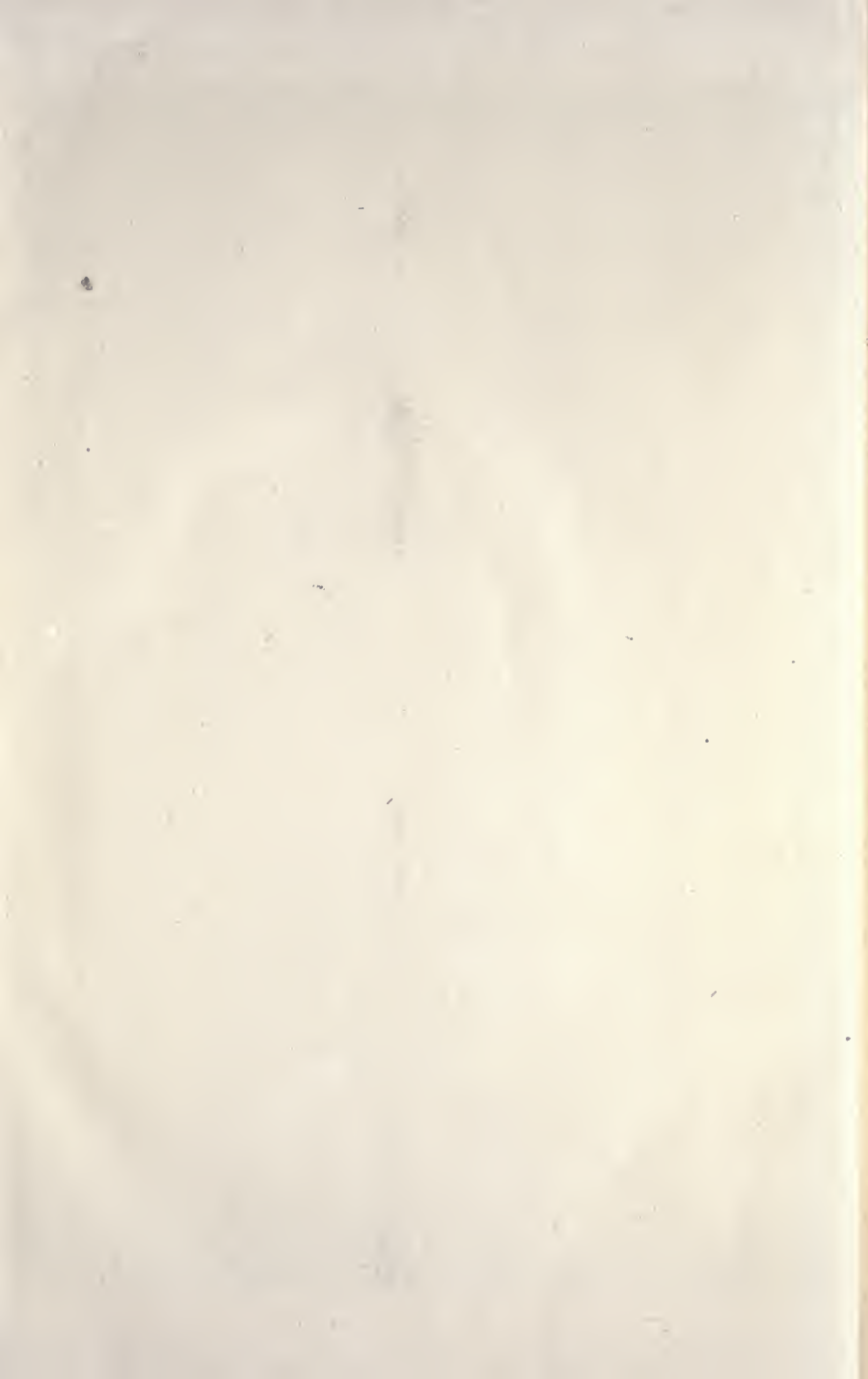
Jones now stood upon the threshold of his greatest victory. His bold and chivalric mind had longed for battle, and recoiled from the less glorious pursuit of burning helpless merchantmen, and terrorizing small towns and villages. He now saw before him a chance to meet the enemy in a fair fight, muzzle to muzzle, and with no overpowering odds on either side. Although the Americans had six vessels to the Englishmen's two, the odds were in no wise in their favor. Two of the vessels were pilot-boats, which, of course, kept out of the battle. The "Vengeance," though ordered to render the larger vessels any possible assistance, kept out of the fight altogether, and even neglected to make any attempt to overhaul the flying band of merchantmen. As for the "Alliance," under the erratic Landais, she only entered the conflict at the last moment; and then her broadsides, instead of being delivered into the enemy, crashed through the already



THE ACTION BETWEEN THE "BON HOMME RICHARD" AND THE "SERAPIS," SEPTEMBER 23, 1779









By courtesy of Hon. Theo. Sutro

RETURN OF THE CONQUERORS

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THE STORY OF OUR NAVY

From Colonial Days to the
Present Time

BY

WILLIS JOHN ABBOT

AUTHOR OF THE BLUE JACKET SERIES, THE BATTLEFIELD SERIES,
AMERICAN MERCHANT SHIPS AND SAILORS

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

VOL. I



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NOTE

THIS volume is a history, told in a popular, narrative form, of the United States Navy, from its beginning to May 1, 1916. Within its compass is not space for all the events, or even for the mention of all the figures in America's defence of her honors upon the seas. Rather does it aim to give a running narrative of the course of the development of the United States Navy, from its earliest beginnings to the present time, and to tell the story of the picturesque features of its early struggles and its later triumphs.

The author desires to express his thanks to the Hon. Theodore Sutro for permission to use the copyrighted reproductions of certain paintings by the distinguished marine artist, Edward Moran. The fine examples represented in this book are chosen from thirteen paintings to typify thirteen chapters in the History of America on the Sea. Nothing is better adapted to educate and stimulate American interests upon the ocean than a careful study of the reproductions of these remarkable paintings.

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THE STORY OF OUR NAVY

VOL. I

CHAPTER I

The Navy of Colonial Days—Discontent in the Colonies—The Evil of Impressment—Destruction of the "Gaspee"—John Manly, Father of the American Navy—The First Ship's Roster—The Many Flags.

IN this second decade of the Twentieth Century, when the navy of the United States is conceded by all to be third among the floating fighting forces of the nations, and held by many to be second, the story of its beginnings seems trivial and hardly worth the telling or the reading. One is apt to think that, in the face of the present-day voyage of sixteen steel-armored battleships around Cape Horn and the world, the similar voyage of Commodore Porter in the frigate "Essex" in 1812 is of slight import. And when we have in mind Dewey destroying in one morning's battle all vestige of Spanish power in the Far East, and Schley and Sampson in a few hours ending Spain's rule in the West Indies—the very lands which she was first to discover, to develop, and to exploit—what was done in the earlier days of the navy may seem of little importance.

But the armies of Washington were puny in comparison even with those which the nation sent forth for the subjugation of the Philippines. Nevertheless, the "ragged continentals" builded a nation. Paul Jones was proud when he secured command of the "Bon Homme Richard," a ship mounting forty guns,

which would have been put out of action by one shell from the secondary battery of any modern American warship. Yet with that one weak ship he changed the story of naval triumphs and won such fame that, after more than a century of oblivion, his body was saved from an obscure resting-place in Paris, brought to the United States in a war vessel, and rests in the monumental chapel at Annapolis as an inspiration to the lads there being educated for the glorious service of the nation afloat. So it may be asserted that even in the light of recent magnificent achievements of the navy, the story of its earliest days is not without importance—as it certainly is not without interest.

In telling this story, some license must be allowed in the use of terms. There were sharp sea fights in the colonial days, and in the opening years of the Revolution. But there was no navy in the true sense of the word until the Revolution was well advanced.

Prior to that time there were ships commissioned by individual colonies, and privateers. Yet what they did on the ocean showed the naval spirit animating the American character—a spirit which, if it lagged between 1815 and 1861, and 1870 and 1890, seems now to have been effectively revived.

Much of the discontent in the colonies, which led up to the Revolution, was bred of the aggressions of British men-of-war, and particularly of the practice of impressing American seamen. As early as 1764 the people of Newport seized a shore battery and fired upon a king's ship in the harbor, thus anticipating by twelve years the "embattled farmers" of Concord, who "fired the shot heard around the world." One incident is typical of many which led the seafaring folk of the colonies to be early in revolt.

One breezy afternoon, a stanch brig, under full sail,

came up the bay, and entered the harbor of Newport. Her sides were weather-beaten, and her dingy sails and patched cordage showed that she had just completed her long voyage. Her crew, a fine set of bronzed and hardy sailors, were gathered on her fore-castle, eagerly regarding the cluster of cottages that made up the little town of Newport. In those cottages were many loved ones, wives, mothers, and sweethearts, whom the brave fellows had not seen for long and weary months; for the brig was just returning from a voyage to the western coast of Africa.

It is easy to imagine the feelings aroused by the arrival of a ship in port after a long voyage. From the outmost end of the longest wharf the relatives and friends of the sailors eagerly watch the approaching vessel, striving to find in her appearance some token of the safety of the loved ones on board. If a flag hangs at half-mast in the rigging, bitter is the suspense, and fearful the dread, of each anxious watcher, lest her husband or lover or son be the unfortunate one whose death is mourned. And on the deck of the ship the excitement is no less great. Even the hardened breast of the sailor swells with emotion when he first catches sight of his native town, after long months of absence. With eyes sharpened by constant searching for objects upon the broad bosom of the ocean, he scans the waiting crowd, striving to distinguish in the distance some well-beloved face. His spirits are light with the happy anticipation of a season in port with his loved ones, and he discharges his last duties before leaving the ship with a blithe heart.

So it was with the crew of the home-coming brig. Right merrily they sung out their choruses as they pulled at the ropes, and brought the vessel to anchor. The rumble of the hawser through the hawse-holes was sweet music to their ears; and so intent were they upon

the crowd on the dock, that they did not notice two long-boats which had put off from the man-of-war, and were pulling for the brig. The captain of the merchantman, however, noticed the approach of the boats, and wondered what it meant. "Those fellows think I've smuggled goods aboard," said he. "However, they can spend their time searching if they want. I've nothing in the hold I'm afraid to have seen."

The boats were soon alongside; and two or three officers, with a handful of jackies, clambered aboard the brig.

"Muster your men aft, captain," said the leader, scorning any response to the captain's salutation. "The king has need of a few fine fellows for his service."

"Surely, sir, you are not about to press any of these men," protested the captain. "They are just returning after a long voyage, and have not yet seen their families."

"What's that to me, sir?" was the response. "Muster your crew without more words."

Sullenly the men came aft, and ranged themselves in line before the boarding-officers. Each feared lest he might be one of those chosen to fill the ship's roll of the "Maidstone"; yet each cherished the hope that he might be spared to go ashore, and see the loved ones whose greeting he had so fondly anticipated.

The boarding-officers looked the crew over, and, after consulting together, gruffly ordered the men to go below, and pack up their traps.

"Surely you don't propose to take my entire crew?" said the captain of the brig in wondering indignation.

"I know my business, sir," was the gruff reply, "and I do not propose to suffer any more interference."

The crew of the brig soon came on deck, carrying their bags of clothes, and were ordered into the man-

o'-war's boats, which speedily conveyed them to their floating prison. Their fond visions of home had been rudely dispelled. They were now enrolled in His Majesty's service, and subject to the will of a blue-coated tyrant. This was all their welcome home.

Newport and the maritime colonies of New England sent thousands of sailors into the war with Great Britain, and dispatched scores of privateers. It was exactly such outrages as the foregoing that made these people spring to arms. Long before the academic question of "taxation without representation" turned Boston harbor into a teapot the people along Narragansett Bay were fighting for their personal rights on water and on land. The affair of the "Gaspee" is the most typical in this conflict, though not the first. The "Gaspee" was an armed vessel stationed in Narragansett Bay to enforce the revenue. She was commanded by Lieutenant Dudingston of the British navy, and carried eight guns. By pursuing the usual tactics of the British officers stationed on the American coast, Dudingston had made himself hated; and his vessel was marked for destruction.

The propitious time arrived one bright June morning in the year 1772, when the "Gaspee" gave chase to a Newport packet which was scudding for Providence, under the command of Captain Thomas Lindsey. The armed vessel was a clean-cut little craft, and, carrying no heavier load than a few light guns of the calibre then in vogue, could overhaul with ease almost any merchantman on the coast. So on this eventful day she was rapidly overhauling the chase, when, by a blunder of the pilot, she was run hard and fast upon a spit of sand running out from Namquit Point, and thus saw her projected prize sail away in triumph.

But the escape of her prize was not the greatest disaster that was to befall the "Gaspee" that day.

Lindsey, finding himself safe from the clutches of the enemy, continued his course to Providence, and on arriving at that city reported the condition of the "Gaspee" to a prominent citizen, who straightway determined to organize an expedition for the destruction of the pest of marine traffic. He therefore gave orders to a trusty ship-master to collect eight of the largest long-boats in the harbor, and, having muffled their oars and rowlocks, placed them at Fenner's Wharf, near a noted tavern.

That night, soon after sunset, as the tradesmen were shutting up their shops, and the laboring men were standing on the streets talking after their day's work, a man passed down the middle of each street, beating a drum, and crying aloud:

"The schooner 'Gaspee' is ashore on Namquit Point. Who will help destroy her?"

All who expressed a desire to join in the enterprise were directed to repair to the Sabin House; and thither, later in the evening, flocked many of the townspeople, carrying guns, powder-flasks, and bullet-pouches. Within the house all was life and bustle. The great hall was crowded with determined men, discussing the plan of attack. Guns stood in every corner, while down in the kitchen half a dozen men stood about a glowing fire busily casting bullets. At last, all being prepared, the party crossed the street to the dock, and embarked,—a veteran sea-captain taking the tiller of each boat.

On the way down the harbor the boats stopped, and took aboard a number of paving-stones and stout clubs, as weapons for those who had no muskets. After this stoppage the boats continued on their way, until, when within sixty yards of the "Gaspee," the long-drawn hail, "Who comes there?" rang out over the water. No answer was made, and the lookout quickly

repeated his hail. Captain Whipple, one of the leaders of the attack, then responded,—

“I want to come on board.”

Dudingston, who was below at the time, rushed on deck, exclaiming, “Stand off. You can’t come aboard.”

As Dudingston stood at the side of the “Gaspee” warning off the assailants, he presented a good mark; and Joseph Bucklin, who pulled an oar in the leading boat, turned to a comrade and said, “Ephe, lend me your gun, and I can kill that fellow.” The gun was accordingly handed him, and he fired. Dudingston fell to the deck. Just as the shot was fired, the leader of the assailants cried out:

“I am sheriff of the county of Kent. I am come for the commander of this vessel; and have him I will, dead or alive. Men, spring to your oars.”

In an instant the boats were under the lee of the schooner, and the attacking party was clambering over the side. The first man to attempt to board seized a rope, and was clambering up, when one of the British cut the rope, and let him fall into the water. He quickly recovered himself, and was soon on deck, where he found his comrades driving the crew of the “Gaspee” below, and meeting with but little resistance.

A surgeon who was with the party of Americans led the boarders below, and began the task of tying the hands of the captured crew with strong tarred cord. While thus engaged, he was called on deck.

“What is wanted, Mr. Brown?” asked he, calling the name of the person inquiring for him.

“Don’t call names, but go immediately into the cabin,” was the response. “There is one wounded, and will bleed to death.”

The surgeon went into the captain’s cabin, and there found Dudingston, severely wounded, and bleeding freely. Seeing no cloth suitable for bandages, the

surgeon opened his vest, and began to tear his own shirt into strips to bind up the wound. With the tenderest care the hurt of the injured officer was attended to; and he was gently lowered into a boat, and rowed up the river to Providence.

The Americans remained in possession of the captured schooner, and quickly began the work of demolition. In the captain's cabin were a number of bottles of liquor, and for these the men made a rush; but the American surgeon dashed the bottles to pieces with the heels of his heavy boots, so that no scenes of drunkenness were enacted. After breaking up the furniture and trappings of the craft, her people were bundled over the side into the boats of their captors, and the torch was set to the schooner. The boats lay off a little distance until the roaring flames satisfied them that the "Gaspee" would never again annoy American merchantmen. As the schooner's shotted guns went off one after the other, the Americans turned their boats' prows homeward, and soon dispersed quietly to their homes.

After the battle of Lexington attacks upon British armed vessels were numerous all along the coast from Maine to the Carolinas. The coastwise waters saw some hard fighting, but it was not naval, except in the sense that it was done afloat and mainly by seafaring men. But it was in the latter part of 1775 that the first suggestion of a true navy was made by General Washington. On his own responsibility he sent out two armed schooners to capture the enemy's ships and secure provisions and munitions of war. They had some success, but when in October of the same year Congress commissioned several small vessels the American navy had its true beginning.

The first vessel thus commissioned was the "Lee," a small but swift brig, commanded by John Manly,

who really deserves the title of the "Father of the American Navy." The work of Manly and of the small vessels of which the "Lee" was a type encouraged Congress to proceed with the organization of a true navy, and by 1776 the building of thirteen war vessels, carrying from twenty-four to thirty-two guns each, had been authorized. But as some naval force was obviously necessary during the construction of this fleet, five old vessels were procured, and the new navy was organized with the following roster of officers:

ESEK HOPKINS.....*Commander-in-chief*
 DUDLEY SALTONSTALL.....*Captain of the "Alfred"*
 ABRAHAM WHIPPLE.....*Captain of the "Columbus"*
 NICHOLAS BIDDLE...*Captain of the "Andrea Doria"*
 JOHN B. HOPKINS.....*Captain of the "Cabot"*

A long list of lieutenants was also provided, among whom stands out boldly the name of John Paul Jones. John Manly, whose dashing work in the schooner "Lee" we have already noticed, was left in command of his little craft until the thirty-two-gun ship "Hancock" was completed, when he was put in command of her.

Under flags of various designs—the rattlesnake with the motto, "Don't Tread on Me"; the flag of each colony; the flag first hoisted by Paul Jones, showing a pine tree on a white ground, with "Liberty Tree" and "Appeal to God" displayed; these and other American vessels entered upon a naval war with the nation which even then was the greatest of all sea powers.

CHAPTER II

Paul Jones, the First Great American Seafighter, but to the British a Pirate—In Command of the "Ranger"—His Invasion of England.

WITH the crowning importance of the later days of the American navy it is possible to pass over hastily its earlier achievements—the triumphs of Ezekiel Hopkins, Captain Mugford, Captain Wickes, and a host of lesser seafighters of the Colonial navy must be set aside for the more careful description of the naval cruises and actions which had a direct bearing on the fate of the infant nation. That American privateers harried the seas, driving British cruisers to port, had its influence, of course, on the issue of the conflict. But for the important naval operations we must turn to the names of John Paul Jones, Nicholas Biddle, and Isaac Barry.

John Paul Jones was a Scotchman, born in July, 1747. By inheritance his name was John Paul, and it was not until 1773 when residing in North Carolina that he added the surname of Jones. Almost from his earliest days a seaman, he was in turn an apprentice, mate of a slaver, commander of merchantmen, until, winning his way upward by sheer pertinacity, he became the foremost figure in the naval annals of the American Revolution. His earlier services in this struggle were as a privateersman, or in command of small commissioned vessels. But even thus handicapped by lacking power to meet and give successful conflict to any armed British vessel, he preyed upon British commerce in a way that struck terror to ship-owners and to shippers, and brought into the United

Colonies supplies of uncounted value to Washington's half-clad and starving army. It was this period of Jones' activity that led the British to dub him "Paul Jones, the pirate," and to publish broadsides ranking him with Tench, Blackbeard, and Captain Kidd. In one brief cruise he captured sixteen vessels; in another he landed on the British territory of Nova Scotia, burned a great transport and a warehouse full of supplies, and returned to port with five prizes. Exploits like this caused Congress to call upon him for advice as to the increase and organization of the navy, and on this task he spent six months ashore.

It was not until June 14, 1777, that a command was found for him. This was the eighteen-gun ship "Ranger," built to carry a frigate's battery of twenty-six guns. She had been built for the revolutionary government, at Portsmouth, and was a stanch-built, solid craft, though miserably slow and somewhat crank. Jones, though disappointed with the sailing qualities of the ship, was nevertheless vastly delighted to be again in command of a man-of-war, and wasted no time in getting her ready for sea.

It so happened that, on the very day Paul Jones received his commission as commander of the "Ranger," the Continental Congress adopted the Stars and Stripes for the national flag. Jones, anticipating this action, had prepared a flag in accordance with the proposed designs, and, upon hearing of the action of Congress, had it run to the masthead, while the cannon of the "Ranger" thundered out their deep-mouthed greetings to the starry banner destined to wave over the most glorious nation of the earth. Thus it happened that the same hand that had given the pine-tree banner to the winds was the first to fling out to the breezes the bright folds of the Stars and Stripes.

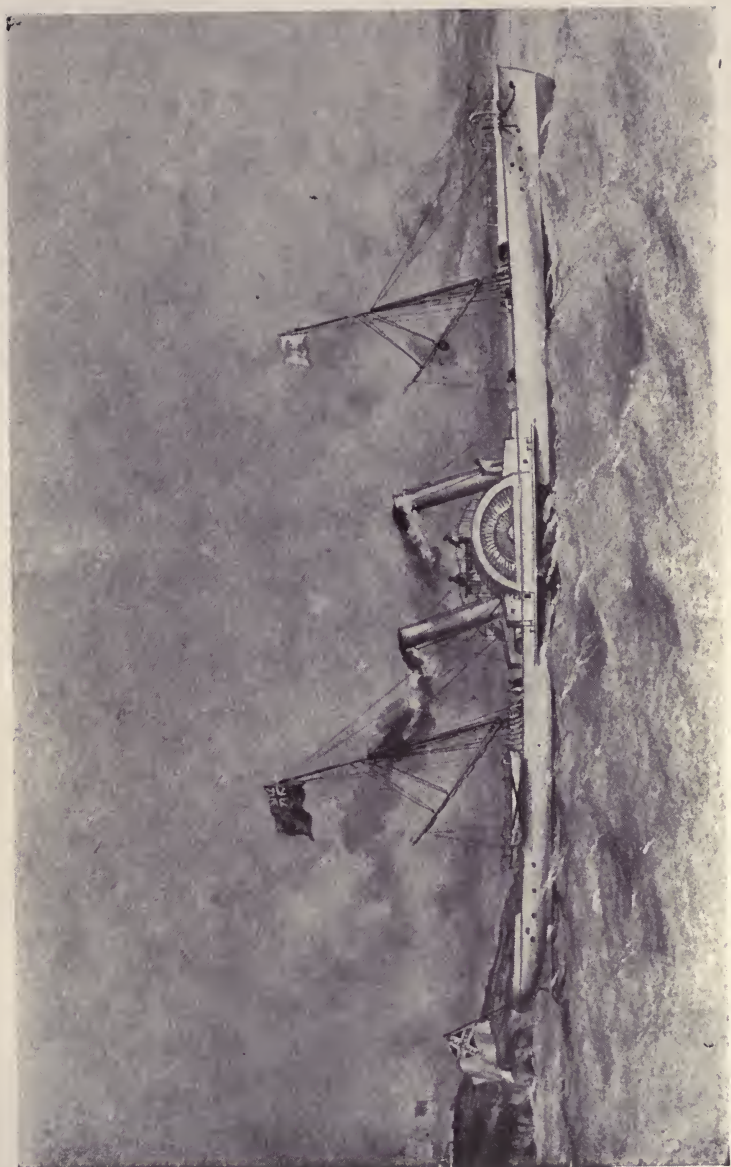
Early in October the "Ranger" left Portsmouth,

and made for the coast of France. Astute agents of the Americans in that country were having a fleet, powerful frigate built there for Jones, which he was to take, leaving the sluggish "Ranger" to be sold. But, on his arrival at Nantes, Jones was grievously disappointed to learn that the British Government had so vigorously protested against the building of a vessel-of-war in France for the Americans, that the French Government had been obliged to notify the American agents that their plan must be abandoned. France was at this time at peace with Great Britain, and, though inclined to be friendly with the rebellious colonies, was not ready to entirely abandon her position as a neutral power. Later, when she took up arms against England, she gave the Americans every right in her ports they could desire.

Jones thus found himself in European waters with a vessel too weak to stand against the frigates England could send to take her, and too slow to elude them. But he determined to strike some effective blows for the cause of liberty. Accordingly he planned an enterprise, which, for audacity of conception and dash in execution, has never been equalled by any naval expedition since.

This was nothing less than a virtual invasion of England. The "Ranger" lay at Brest. Jones planned to dash across the English Channel, and cruise along the coast of England, burning shipping and towns, as a piece of retaliation upon the British for their wanton outrages along the American coast. It was a bold plan. The channel was thronged with the heavy frigates of Great Britain, any one of which could have annihilated the audacious Yankee cruiser. Nevertheless, Jones determined to brave the danger.

At the outset, it seemed as though his purpose was to be balked by heavy weather. For days after the



TYPICAL BLOCKADE RUNNER



"Ranger" left Brest, she battled against the chop-seas of the English Channel. The sky was dark, and the light of the sun obscured by gray clouds. The wind whistled through the rigging, and tore at the tightly furled sails. Great green walls of water, capped with snowy foam, beat thunderously against the sides of the "Ranger." Now and then a port would be driven in, and the men between decks drenched by the incoming deluge. The "Ranger" had encountered an equinoctial gale in its worst form.

When the gale died away, Jones found himself off the Scilly Islands, in full view of the coast of England. Here he encountered a merchantman, which he took and scuttled, sending the crew ashore to spread the news that an American man-of-war was ravaging the channel. Having alarmed all England, he changed his hunting-ground to St. George's Channel and the Irish Sea, where he captured several ships; sending one, a prize, back to Brest. He was in waters with which he had been familiar from his youth, and he made good use of his knowledge; dashing here and there, lying in wait in the highway of commerce, and then secreting himself in some sequestered cove. All England was aroused by the exploits of the Yankee cruiser. Never since the days of the Invincible Armada had war been so brought home to the people of the tight little island.

But Paul Jones showed Great Britain that her boasted power was a bubble. He ravaged the seas within cannon-shot of English headlands. He captured and burned merchantmen, drove the rates of insurance up to panic prices, paralyzed British shipping-trade, and even made small incursions into British territory.

The reports that reached Jones of British barbarity along the American coast, of the burning of Falmouth, of tribute levied on innumerable seaport towns,—all

aroused in him a determination to strike a retaliatory blow. Soon after, he entered the bay of Carrickfergus, on which is situated the Irish commercial city of Belfast. The bay was constantly filled with merchantmen; and the "Ranger," with her ports closed, and her warlike character carefully disguised, excited no suspicion aboard a trim, heavy-built craft that lay at anchor a little farther up the bay. This craft was the British man-of-war "Drake," mounting twenty guns. Soon after his arrival in the bay, Jones learned the character of the "Drake," and determined to attempt her capture during the night. Accordingly he dropped anchor near by, and, while carefully concealing the character of his craft, made every preparation for a midnight fight.

At ten o'clock, the tramp of men about the capstan gave notice that the anchor was being brought to the catheads. Soon the creaking of cordage, and the snapping of the sails, told that the fresh breeze was being caught by the spreading sails. Then the waves rippled about the bow of the ship, and the "Ranger" was fairly under way.

It was a pitch-dark night, but the lights on board the "Drake" showed where she was lying. On the "Ranger" all lights were extinguished, and no noise told of her progress towards her enemy. It was the captain's plan to run his vessel across the "Drake's" cable, drop his own anchor, let the "Ranger" swing alongside the Englishman, and then fight it out at close quarters. But this plan, though well laid, failed of execution. The anchor was not let fall in season; and the "Ranger," instead of bringing up alongside her enemy, came to anchor half a cable-length astern. The swift-flowing tide and the fresh breeze made it impossible to warp the ship alongside: so Jones ordered the cable cut, and the "Ranger" scudded down the

bay before the ever-freshening gale. It does not appear that the people on the "Drake" were aware of the danger they so narrowly escaped.

The wind that had aided the tide in defeating Jones's enterprise blew stronger and stronger, and before morning the sea was tossing before a regular northeast gale. Against it the "Ranger" could make no headway: so Jones gave his ship her head, and scudded before the wind until within the vicinity of Whitehaven, when he determined to again attempt to destroy the shipping in that port. This time he was successful. Bringing the "Ranger" to anchor near the bar, Captain Jones called for volunteers to accompany him on the expedition. He himself was to be their leader; for as a boy he had often sailed in and out of the little harbor, knew where the forts stood, and where the colliers anchored most thickly. The landing party was divided into two boat-loads; Jones taking command of one, while Lieutenant Wallingford held the tiller of the other boat. With muffled oars the Americans made for the shore, the boats' keels grated upon the pebbly beach, and an instant later the adventurers had scaled the ramparts of the forts, and had made themselves masters of the garrisons. All was done quietly. The guns in the fortifications were spiked; and, leaving the few soldiers on guard gagged and bound, Jones and his followers hastened down to the wharves to set fire to the shipping.

In the harbor were not less than two hundred and twenty vessels, large and small. On the north side of the harbor, near the forts, were about one hundred and fifty vessels. These Jones undertook to destroy. The others were left to Lieutenant Wallingford, with his boat's crew of fifteen picked men.

When Jones and his followers reached the cluster of merchantmen, they found their torches so far burned

out as to be useless. Failure stared them in the face then, when success was almost within their grasp. Jones, however, was not to be balked of his prey. Running his boat ashore, he hastened to a neighboring house, where he demanded candles. With these he returned, led his men aboard a large ship from which the crew fled, and deliberately built a fire in her hold. Lest the fire should go out, he found a barrel of tar, and threw it upon the flames. Then with the great ship roaring and crackling, and surrounded by scores of other vessels in danger from the flames, Jones withdrew, thinking his work complete.

Many writers have criticised Paul Jones for not having stayed longer to complete the destruction of the vessels in the harbor. But, with the gradually brightening day, his position, which was at the best very dangerous, was becoming desperate. There were one hundred and fifty vessels in that part of the harbor; the crews averaged ten men to a vessel: so that nearly fifteen hundred men were opposed to the plucky little band of Americans. The roar of the fire aroused the people of the town, and they rushed in crowds to the wharf. In describing the affair Jones writes, "The inhabitants began to appear in thousands, and individuals ran hastily toward us. I stood between them and the ship on fire, with my pistol in my hand, and ordered them to stand, which they did with some precipitation. The sun was a full hour's march above the horizon; and, as sleep no longer ruled the world, it was time to retire. We re-embarked without opposition, having released a number of prisoners, as our boats could not carry them. After all my people had embarked, I stood upon the pier for a considerable space, yet no person advanced. I saw all the eminences round the town covered with the amazed inhabitants."

As his boat drew away from the blazing shipping,

Jones looked anxiously across the harbor to the spot to which Lieutenant Wallingford had been dispatched. But no flames were seen in that quarter; for, Wallingford's torches having gone out, he had abandoned the enterprise. And so the Americans, having regained their ship, took their departure, leaving only one of the enemy's vessels burning. A most lame and impotent conclusion it was indeed; but, as Jones said, "What was done is sufficient to show that not all the boasted British navy is sufficient to protect their own coasts, and that the scenes of distress which they have occasioned in America may soon be brought home to their own doors."

CHAPTER III

Career of Paul Jones Continued—His Descent upon the Castle of Lord Selkirk—The Affair of the Plate—The Descent upon Whitehaven—The Battle with the "Drake."

WE now come to the glorious part of the career of Paul Jones upon the ocean. Heretofore he has been chiefly occupied in the capture of defenceless merchantmen. His work has been that of the privateer, even if not of the pirate that the British have always claimed he was. But the time came when Jones proved that he was ready to fight an adversary of his mettle; was willing to take heavy blows, and deal stunning ones in return. His daring was not confined to dashing expeditions in which the danger was chiefly overcome by spirit and rapid movements. While this class of operations was ever a favorite with the doughty seaman, he was not at all averse to the deadly naval duel.

We shall for a time abandon our account of the general naval incidents of the Revolution, to follow the career of Paul Jones to the end of the war. His career is not only the most interesting, but the most important, feature of the naval operations of that war. He stands out alone, a grand figure in naval history, as does Decatur in the wars with the Barbary pirates, or Farragut in the war for the Union. The war of 1812 affords no such example of single greatness in the navy. There we find Perry, McDonough, and Porter, all equally great. But in '76 there was no one to stand beside Paul Jones.

When the "Ranger" left the harbor of Whitehaven, her captain was heavy-hearted. He felt that he had had the opportunity to strike a heavy blow at the British

shipping, but had nevertheless inflicted only a trifling hurt. Angry with himself for not having better planned the adventure, and discontented with his lieutenant for not having by presence of mind prevented the fiasco, he felt that peace of mind could only be obtained by some deed of successful daring.

He was cruising in seas familiar to him as a sailor. Along the Scottish shores his boyhood hours had been spent. This knowledge he sought to turn to account. From the deck of his ship, he could see the wooded shores of St. Mary's Island, on which were the landed estates of Lord Selkirk, a British noble of ancient lineage and political prominence. On the estate of this nobleman Paul Jones was born, and there he passed the few years of his life that elapsed before he forsook the land for his favorite element.

Leaning against the rail on the quarter-deck of the "Ranger," Jones could see through his spy-glass the turrets and spires of Lord Selkirk's castle. As he gazed, there occurred to him the idea, that if he could send a landing party ashore, seize the castle, capture the peer, and bear him off into captivity, he would not only strike terror into the hearts of the British, but would give the Americans a prisoner who would serve as a hostage to secure good treatment for the hapless Americans who had fallen into the hands of the enemy.

With Jones, the conception of a plan was followed by its swift execution. Disdaining to wait for night-fall, he chose two boats' crews of tried and trusty men, and landed. The party started up the broad and open highway leading to the castle. They had gone but a few rods, however, when they encountered two countrymen, who stared a moment at the force of armed men, and then turned in fear to escape.

"Halt!" rang out the clear voice of the leader of

the blue-jackets; and the peasants fell upon their faces in abject terror. Jones directed that they be brought to him; and he questioned them kindly, setting their minds at rest, and learning from them much of the castle and its inmates. Lord Selkirk was away from home. This to Jones was bitter news. It seemed as though some evil genius was dogging his footsteps, bringing failure upon his most carefully planned enterprises. But he was not a man to repine over the inevitable, and he promptly ordered his men to the right about, and made for the landing-place again.

But the sailors were not so unselfish in their motives as their captain. They had come ashore expecting to plunder the castle of the earl, and they now murmured loudly over the abandonment of the adventure. They saw the way clear before them. No guards protected the house. The massive ancestral plate, with which all English landed families are well provided, was unprotected by bolts or bars. They felt that, in retreating, they were throwing away a chance to despoil their enemy, and enrich themselves.

Jones felt the justice of the complaint of the sailors; but only after a fierce struggle with his personal scruples could he yield the point. The grounds of the Earl of Selkirk had been his early playground. A lodge on the vast estate had been his childhood's home. Lady Selkirk had shown his family many kindnesses. To now come to her house as a robber and pillager, seemed the blackest ingratitude; but, on the other hand, he had no right to permit his personal feelings to interfere with his duty to the crew. The sailors had followed him into danger many a time, and this was their first opportunity for financial reward. With a sigh Jones abandoned his intention of protecting the property of Lady Selkirk, and ordered his lieutenant to proceed to the castle, and capture the family plate. Jones him-

self returned to the ship, resolved to purchase the spoils at open sale, and return them to their former owner.

The blue-jackets continued their way up the highway, and, turning aside where a heavy gate opened into a stately grove, demanded of an old man who came, wondering, out of the lodge, that he give them instant admittance. Then, swinging into a trot, they ran along the winding carriage-drive until they came out on the broad lawn that extended in front of the castle. Here for the first time they were seen by the inmates of the castle; and faint screams of fear, and shouts of astonishment, came from the open windows of the stately pile. The men-servants came rushing out to discover who the lawless crowd that so violated the sanctity of an English earl's private park could be; but their curiosity soon abated when a few stout blue-jackets, cutlass and pistol in hand, surrounded them, and bade them keep quiet. The lieutenant, with two stout seamen at his back, then entered the castle, and sought out the mistress, who received him with calm courtesy, with a trace of scorn, but with no sign of fear.

Briefly the lieutenant told his errand. The countess gave an order to a butler, and soon a line of stout footmen entered, bearing the plate. Heavy salvers engraved with the family arms of Lord Selkirk, quaint drinking-cups and flagons curiously carved, ewers, goblets, platters, covers, dishes, teapots, and all kinds of table utensils were there, all of exquisitely artistic workmanship, and bearing the stamp of antiquity. When all was ready, the lieutenant called in two of the sailors from the lawn; and soon the whole party, bearing the captured treasure, disappeared in the curves of the road.

A few weeks later, the captured plate was put up for sale by the prize agents. Captain Jones, though not a rich man, bought it, and returned it to the countess. Lord Selkirk, in acknowledging its receipt, wrote:

"And on all occasions, both now and formerly, I have done you the justice to tell that you made an offer of returning the plate very soon after your return to Brest; and although you yourself were not at my house, but remained at the shore with your boat, that you had your officers and men in such extraordinary good discipline, that your having given them the strictest orders to behave well,—to do no injury of any kind, to make no search, but only to bring off what plate was given them,—that in reality they did exactly as was ordered; and that not one man offered to stir from his post on the outside of the house, nor entered the doors, nor said an uncivil word; that the two officers stayed not one-quarter of an hour in the parlor and in the butler's pantry while the butler got the plate together, behaved politely, and asked for nothing but the plate, and instantly marched their men off in regular order; and that both officers and men behaved in all respects so well, that it would have done credit to the best-disciplined troops whatever."

But the British took little notice of the generous reparation made by Captain Jones, and continued to describe him as pirate, ruffian, and murderer.

Some weeks before, Jones had tried to destroy the British man-of-war "Drake" in the harbor of Carrickfergus, but was defeated by an unlucky combination of unfavorable tide and wind. Yet he was determined not to leave those waters without some greater achievement than shore raids and the destruction of merchantmen. So he set forth to find the "Drake," and by a happy coincidence the "Drake" put forth to find him. They met at the mouth of Carrickfergus harbor.

The "Drake" promptly sent out a boat to examine the strange craft, and report upon her character. Jones saw her coming, and resolved to throw her off the

scent. Accordingly, by skilful seamanship, he kept the stern of the "Ranger" continually presented to the prying eyes in the British boat. Turn which way they might, be as swift their manœuvres as they might, the British scouts could see nothing of the "Ranger" but her stern, pierced with two cabin windows, as might be the stern of any merchantman. Her sides, dotted with frowning ports, were kept securely hidden from their eyes.

Though provided with spy-glasses, the people in the boat were totally deceived. Unsuspectingly they came up under the stern of the "Ranger," and demanded to come on board. As the officer in command clambered up a rope, and vaulted the taffrail to the quarter-deck, he saw Paul Jones and his lieutenants, in full uniform, standing before him.

"Why,—why, what ship's this?" stammered the astonished officer.

"This is the American Continental ship 'Ranger,' and you are my prisoner," responded Jones; and at the words a few sailors, with cutlasses and pistols, called to the men in the boat alongside, to come aboard and give themselves up.

From his captives Jones learned that the news of the Whitehaven raid had reached the "Drake" only the night before; and that she had been re-enforcing her crew with volunteers, preparatory to going out in search of the "Ranger." As he stood talking to the captured British naval officer, Jones noticed slender columns of smoke rising from the woods on neighboring highlands, where he knew there were no houses.

"What does that mean?" he asked.

"Alarm fires, sir," answered the captive; "the news of your descent upon Whitehaven is terrifying the whole country."

Soon, however, the attention of the Americans was

diverted from the signal-fires to the "Drake." An appearance of life and bustle was observable about the boat. The shrill notes of the boatswain's whistle, and the tramp of men about the capstan, came faintly over the waters. The rigging was full of sailors, and the sails were being quickly spread to catch the fresh breeze. Soon the ship began to move slowly from her anchorage; she heeled a little to one side, and, responsive to her helm, turned down the bay. She was coming out to look after her lost boat.

Jones determined to hold his ground, and give battle to the Englishman.

At length the "Drake" emerged from the narrow channel of the harbor, and coming within hailing distance of the "Ranger," ran up the flag of England, and hailed:

"What ship is that?"

Paul Jones, himself standing on the taffrail, made answer:

"This is the American Continental ship 'Ranger.' We are waiting for you. The sun is but little more than an hour from setting. It is therefore time to begin."

The "Drake" lay with her bow towards the "Ranger," and a little astern. As Jones finished speaking, he turned to the man at the wheel, and said, "Put your helm up. Up, I say!"

Quickly responsive to her helm, the vessel swung round; and, as her broadside came to bear, she let fly a full broadside of solid shot into the crowded decks and hull of the "Drake." Through timbers and planks, flesh and bone, the iron hail rushed, leaving death, wounds, and destruction in its path. The volunteers that the "Drake" had added to her crew so crowded the decks, that the execution was fearful. It seemed as though every shot found a human mark.

But the British were not slow to return the fire, and the roar of their broadside was heard before the thunder of the American fire had ceased to reverberate among the hills along the shore.

Then followed a desperate naval duel. The tide of victory flowed now this way, and now that. Jones kept his ship at close quarters with the enemy, and stood on the quarter-deck urging on his gunners, now pointing out some vulnerable spot, now applauding a good shot, at one time cheering, and at another swearing, watching every movement of his foe, and giving quick but wise orders to his helmsman, his whole mind concentrated upon the course of battle, and with never a thought for his own safety.

For more than an hour the battle raged, but the superior gunnery of the Americans soon began to tell. The "Drake" fought under no colors, her ensign having been shot away early in the action. But the spirited manner in which her guns were worked gave assurance that she had not struck. The American fire had wrought great execution on the deck of the Englishman. Her captain was desperately wounded early in the fight; and the first lieutenant, who took his place, was struck down by a musket-ball from the "Ranger's" tops. The cockpit of the "Drake" was like a butcher's shambles, so bespattered was it with blood. But on the "Ranger" there was little execution. The brave Wallingford, Jones's first lieutenant and right-hand man, was killed early in the action, and one poor fellow accompanied him to his long account; but beyond this there were no deaths. Six men only were wounded.

The sun was just dipping the lower edge of its great red circle beneath the watery horizon, when the "Drake" began to show signs of failing. First her fire slackened. A few guns would go off at a time,

followed by a long silence. That portion of her masts which was visible above the clouds of gunpowder-smoke showed plainly the results of American gunnery. The sails were shot to ribbons. The cordage cut by the flying shot hung loosely down, or was blown out by the breeze. The spars were shattered, and hung out of place. The mainmast canted to leeward, and was in imminent danger of falling. The jib had been shot away entirely, and was trailing in the water alongside the ship.

Gradually the fire of the "Drake" slackened, until at last it had ceased altogether. Noticing this, Captain Jones gave orders to cease firing; and soon silence reigned over the bay that had for an hour resounded with the thunder of cannon. As the smoke that enveloped the two ships cleared away, the people on the "Ranger" could see an officer standing on the rail of the "Drake" waving a white flag. At the sight a mighty huzza went up from the gallant lads on the Yankee ship, which was, however, quickly checked by Jones.

"Have you struck your flag?" he shouted through a speaking-trumpet.

"We have, sir," was the response.

"Then lay by until I send a boat aboard," directed Captain Jones; and soon after a cutter put off from the side of the "Ranger," and made for the captured ship.

The boarding-officer clambered over the bulwarks of the "Drake," and, veteran naval officer as he was, started in amazement at the scene of bloodshed before him. He had left a ship on which were two dead and six wounded men. He had come to a ship on which were forty men either dead or seriously wounded. Two dismounted cannon lay across the deck, one resting on the shattered and bleeding fragments of a man torn

to pieces by a heavy shot. The deck was slippery with blood. The cock-pit was not large enough to hold all the wounded; and many sufferers lay on the deck crying piteously for aid, and surrounded by the mangled bodies of their dead comrades. The body of the captain, who had died of his wound, lay on the deserted quarter-deck.

Hastily the American officer noted the condition of the prize, and returned to his own ship for aid. All the boats of the "Ranger" were then lowered, and in the growing darkness the work of taking possession of the prize began. Most of the prisoners were transferred to the "Ranger." The dead were thrown overboard without burial service or ceremony of any kind, such is the grim earnestness of war. Such of the wounded as could not be taken care of in the sick-bay of the "Drake" were transferred to the "Ranger." The decks were scrubbed, holystoned, and sprinkled with hot vinegar to take away the smell of the blood-soaked planks. Cordage was spliced, sails mended, shot-holes plugged up; and, by the time morning came, the two ships were sufficiently repaired to be ready to leave the bay.

But, before leaving, Captain Jones set at liberty two fishermen, whom he had captured several days before, and held prisoners lest they should spread the news of his presence in those parts. While the fishermen had been taken on board the "Ranger," and treated with the utmost kindness, their boat had been made fast alongside. Unluckily, however, the stormy weather had torn the boat from its fastenings; and it foundered before the eyes of its luckless owners, who bitterly bewailed their hard fate as they saw their craft disappear. But, when they came to leave the "Ranger," their sorrow was turned to joy; for Jones gave them money enough to buy for them a new boat and

outfit,—a bit of liberality very characteristic of the man.

All Europe now rang with the praises of Paul Jones. Looked at in the calm light of history, his achievements do not appear so very remarkable. But it is none the less true that they have never been paralleled. Before the day of Paul Jones, no hostile vessel had ever swept the English Channel and Irish Sea clear of British merchantmen. And since the day of Paul Jones the exploit has never been repeated, save by the little American brig "Argus" in the War of 1812. But neither before nor since the day of Paul Jones has the spectacle of a British ship in an English port, blazing with fire applied by the torches of an enemy, been seen. And no other man than Paul Jones has, for several centuries, led an invading force down the level highways, and across the green fields, of England.

CHAPTER IV

The Career of Paul Jones Continued—His Search for a Ship—Given Command of the "Bon Homme Richard"—Landais and His Character—The Frustrated Mutiny—Landais Quarrels with Jones—Edinburgh and Leith Threatened—The Dominie's Prayer—The Battle with the "Serapis."

WHEN Paul Jones arrived at Brest, bringing the captured "Drake," he found the situation of affairs materially altered. France had acknowledged the independence of the American Colonies, and had openly espoused their cause as against that of Great Britain. It was no longer necessary to resort to cunning deceptions to buy a warship or sell a prize in a French port. French vessels, manned by French crews and commanded by French officers, were putting to sea to strike a blow against the British. French troops were being sent to America. The Stars and Stripes waved by the side of the *fleur de lys*; and Benjamin Franklin, the American envoy, was the lion of French society, and the idol of the Parisian mob.

Paul Jones saw in this friendship of France for the struggling colonies his opportunity. Heretofore he had been condemned to command only slow-going, weak ships. He had been hampered by a lack of funds for the payment of his crew and the purchase of provisions. More than once the inability of the impoverished Continental Congress to provide the sinews of war had forced him to go down into his own purse for the necessary funds. All this period of penury he now felt was past. He could rely upon the king of France for a proper vessel, and the funds with which to prosecute his work on the seas.

But the sturdy seaman soon found how vexatious is the lot of him who depends upon the bounty of monarchs. Ship after ship was put in commission, but no command was tendered to the distinguished American. The French naval officers had first to be attended to. Jones made earnest appeals to the minister of the marine. He brought every possible influence to bear. His claims were urged by Dr. Franklin, but all to no avail.

Five months of waiting and ceaseless solicitation of the authorities still left the sailor, who had won so many victories, stranded in shameful inactivity. He had shrunk from a personal interview with the king, trusting rather to the efforts of his friends, many of whom were in high favor at Versailles. But one day he happened to light upon an old copy of "Poor Richard's Almanac," that unique publication in which Benjamin Franklin printed so many wise maxims and witty sayings. As Jones listlessly turned its pages, his eye fell upon the maxim:

"If you wish to have any business done faithfully and expeditiously, go and do it yourself. Otherwise, send some one."

Shutting the book, and dashing it to the floor, Jones sprang to his feet exclaiming, "I will go to Versailles this very day." Before night he set out, and soon reached the royal court. His reputation easily gained him an interview; and his frank, self-reliant way so impressed the monarch, that in five days the American was tendered the command of the ship "Daras," mounting forty guns.

Great was the exultation of the American seaman at this happy termination of his labor. Full of gratitude to the distinguished philosopher whose advice had proved so effective, he wrote to the minister of marine, begging permission to change the name of the vessel

to the "Poor Richard," or, translated into French, the "Bon Homme Richard." Permission was readily granted; and thereafter the "Bon Homme Richard," with Paul Jones on the quarter-deck, did valiant work for the cause of the young American Republic.

While the "Bon Homme Richard" was being made ready for sea, the vessels that were to sail with her as consorts were making for the rendezvous at l'Orient. These vessels were the "Pallas," "Cerf," "Vengeance," and "Alliance." The three former were small vessels, built in France, and manned wholly by Frenchmen. The "Alliance" was a powerful, well-built American frigate, carrying an American crew, but commanded by a French officer—Captain Landais.

The choice of Landais to command was unfortunate. American sailors would not ship under a Frenchman. The result was a crew of mixed nationalities, who were barely defeated in an attempt to take the ship by mutiny. But more than that, Landais was jealous, selfish, and eccentric to the point of insanity, as the later course of this narrative will show. The first brief cruise from l'Orient brought nothing but disaster. The "Cerf" did indeed take a small prize, but it was retaken by a British frigate, and after an impotent two months all the vessels returned to l'Orient. Here they lay until the middle of August. More than three months had passed since Jones had been given command of the "Richard." Most of the time had been spent in port. The little cruising that had been done had been unproductive of results. Dissension and jealousy made the squadron absolutely ineffective. As for the "Bon Homme Richard," she had proved a failure; being unable to overhaul the enemy that she wished to engage, or escape from the man-of-war she might wish to avoid. Jones saw his reputation fast slipping away from him. Bitterly he bewailed the fate

that had put him at the mercy of a lot of quarrelsome Frenchmen. He determined that when once again he got to sea he would ignore his consorts, and fight the battles of his country with his own ship only.

It was on the 14th of August that the squadron weighed anchor and left the harbor of l'Orient. The "Richard" was greatly strengthened by the addition to her crew of about one hundred American seamen, who had been sent to France from England in exchange for a number of English prisoners. With her sailed the same vessels that had previously made up the squadron, together with two French privateers,—the "Monsieur" and the "Granville." Four days after sailing, a large French ship in charge of a British prize-crew was sighted. The whole squadron gave chase; and the "Monsieur," being the swiftest sailer of the fleet, recaptured the prize. Then arose a quarrel. The privateersmen claimed that the prize was theirs alone. They had captured it, and the regular naval officers had no authority over them. To this Captain Jones vigorously demurred, and, taking the prize from its captors, sent it to l'Orient to be disposed of in accordance with the laws. In high dudgeon, the privateers vowed vengeance, and that night the "Monsieur" left the squadron. She was a fine, fast vessel, mounting forty guns; and her departure greatly weakened the fleet.

A few days later a second serious loss was encountered. The fleet was lying off Cape Clear, only a few miles from the shore. The day was perfectly calm. Not a breath of wind ruffled the calm surface of the water. The sails flapped idly against the mast. The sailors lay about the decks, trying to keep cool, and lazily watching the distant shore. Far off in the distance a white sail glimmered on the horizon. It

showed no sign of motion, and was clearly becalmed. After some deliberation, Captain Jones determined to attempt to capture the stranger by means of boats. The two largest boats, manned with crews of picked men, were sent out to hail the vessel, and, if she proved to be an enemy, to capture her. In this they were successful, and returned next day, bringing the captured craft.

But, while the two boats were still out after the enemy's ship, the tide changed; and Captain Jones soon saw that his ship was in danger from a powerful current, that seemed to be sweeping her on shore. A few hundred yards from the ship, two dangerous reefs, known as the Skallocks and the Blasketts, reared their black heads above the calm surface of the sea. Toward these rocks the "Bon Homme Richard" was drifting, when Jones, seeing the danger, ordered out two boats to tow the ship to a less perilous position. As the best men of the crew had been sent away to capture the brig, the crews of the two boats were made up of the riff-raff of the crew. Many of them were Englishmen, mere mercenary sailors, who had shipped on the "Richard," secretly intending to desert at the first opportunity. Therefore, when night fell, as they were still in the boats trying to pull the "Richard's" head around, they cut the ropes and made off for the shore.

The desertion was discovered immediately. The night was clear, and by the faint light of the stars the course of the receding boats could be traced. The sailing-master of the "Richard," a Mr. Trent, being the first to discover the treachery, sprang into a boat with a few armed men, and set out in hot pursuit. The bow-gun of the "Richard" was hastily trained on the deserters, and a few cannon-shot sent after them; but without effect. Before the pursuing boat could

overhaul the fugitives, a dense bank of gray fog settled over the water, and pursued and pursuers were hidden from each other and from the gaze of those on the man-of-war. All night long the fog, like a moist, impenetrable curtain, rested on the ocean. The next day the "Cerf" set out to find the missing boats. As she neared the shore, to avoid raising an alarm, she hoisted British colors. Hardly had she done so when she was seen by Trent and his companions. The fog made the outlines of the cutter indistinct, and magnified her in the eyes of the Americans, so that they mistook her for an English man-of-war. To avoid what they thought would lead to certain capture on the water, they ran their boat ashore, and speedily fell into the hands of the British coast guard. They were at once thrown into prison, where the unfortunate Trent soon died. The rest of the party were exchanged later in the war.

The loss of the boats, and capture of Mr. Trent and his followers, were not the only unfortunate results of this incident; for the "Cerf" became lost in the fog, and before she could rejoin the fleet a violent gale sprang up, and she was carried back to the coast of France. She never returned to join the fleet, and Jones found his force again depleted.

But the effective force of the squadron under the command of Paul Jones was weakened far more by the eccentric and mutinous actions of Captain Landais of the "Alliance" than by any losses by desertion or capture. When the news of the loss of two boats by desertion reached the "Alliance," Landais straightway went to the "Richard," and entering the cabin began to upbraid Jones in unmeasured terms for having lost two boats through his folly in sending boats to capture a brig.

"It is not true, Captain Landais," answered Jones,

"that the boats which are lost are the two which were sent to capture the brig."

"Do you tell me I lie?" screamed the Frenchman, white with anger. His officers strove to pacify him, but without avail; and he left the "Richard" vowing that he would challenge Captain Jones, and kill him. Shortly thereafter the "Richard" captured a very valuable prize,—a ship mounting twenty-two guns, and loaded with sails, rigging, anchors, cables, and other essential articles for the navy Great Britain was building on the Lakes. By desertion and other causes, the crew of the "Richard" was greatly depleted, and not enough men could be spared to man the prize. Jones applied to Landais for aid. In response the Frenchman said:

"If it is your wish that I should take charge of the prize, I shall not allow any boat or any individual from the 'Bon Homme Richard' to go near her."

To this absurd stipulation Jones agreed. Landais, having thus assumed complete charge of the prize, showed his incompetence by sending her, together with a prize taken by the "Alliance," to Bergen in Norway. The Danish Government, being on friendly terms with England, immediately surrendered the vessels to the British ambassador; and the cause of the young republic was cheated of more than two hundred thousand dollars through the insane negligence of the French captain.

On the 15th of September, the three vessels lay off the port of Leith, a thriving city, which was then, as now, the seaport for the greater city of Edinburgh, which stands a little farther inland. Jones had come to this point cherishing one of those daring plans of which his mind was so fertile. He had learned that the harbor was full of shipping, and defended only by a single armed vessel of twenty guns. Shore batteries there were none. The people of the town were resting

in fancied security, and had no idea that the dreaded Paul Jones was at their very harbor's mouth. It would have been an easy matter for the three cruisers to make a dash into the harbor, take some distinguished prisoners, demand a huge ransom, fire the shipping, and escape again to the open sea. Had Jones been in reality, as he was in name, the commander of the little fleet, the exploit would have been performed. But the lack of authority which had hampered him throughout his cruise paralyzed him here. By the time he had overcome the timid objections of the captains of the "Vengeance" and the "Pallas," all Leith was aroused. Still Jones persevered. His arrangements were carefully perfected. Troops were to be landed under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Chamillard, who was to lay before the chief magistrate of the town the following letter, written by Jones himself:

I do not wish to distress the poor inhabitants. My intention is only to demand your contribution toward the reimbursement which Britain owes to the much injured citizens of America. Savages would blush at the unmanly violation and rapacity that have marked the tracks of British tyranny in America, from which neither virgin innocence nor helpless age has been a plea of protection or pity.

Leith and its port now lay at our mercy. And did not the plea of humanity stay the just hand of retaliation, I should without advertisement lay it in ashes. Before I proceed to that stern duty as an officer, my duty as a man induces me to propose to you, by means of a reasonable ransom, to prevent such a scene of horror and distress. For this reason, I have authorized Lieutenant-Colonel de Chamillard to agree with you on the terms of ransom, allowing you exactly half an hour's reflection before you finally accept or reject the terms which he shall propose.

The landing parties having been chosen, the order of attack mapped out, and part to be taken by each boat's crew accurately defined, the three vessels advanced to the attack. It was a bright Sunday morning. A light breeze blowing on shore wafted the three vessels gently along the smooth surface of the bay. It

is said that as the invaders passed the little town of Kirkaldy, the people were at church, but, seeing the three men-of-war passing, deserted the sacred edifice for the beach, where the gray-haired pastor, surrounded by his flock, offered the following remarkable appeal to the Deity:

"Now, dear Lord, dinna ye think it a shame for ye to send this vile pirate to rob our folk o' Kirkaldy? Ye ken that they are puir enow already, and hae nae-thing to spare. The way the wind blaws, he'll be here in a jiffy. And wha kens what he may do? He's nae too good for ony thing. Mickles the mischief he has done already. He'll burn their hooses, take their very claes, and strip them to the very sark. And waes me, wha kens but that the bluidy villain might tak' their lives! The puir weemin are most frightened out of their wits, and the bairns screeching after them. I canna think of it! I canna think of it!

"I hae long been a faithful servant to ye, O Lord. But gin ye dinna turn the wind about, and blaw the scoundrel out of our gate, I'll nae stir a foot, but will just sit here till the tide comes. Sae tak' your will o't."

Never was prayer more promptly answered. Hardly had the pastor concluded his prayer, when the wind veered round, and soon a violent gale was blowing off shore. In the teeth of the wind, the ships could make no headway. The gale increased in violence until it rivalled in fierceness a tornado. The sea was lashed into fury, and great waves arose, on the crests of which the men-of-war were tossed about like fragile shells. The coal-ship which had been captured was so racked and torn by the heavy seas, that her seams opened, and she foundered so speedily, that only by the most active efforts was her crew saved. After several hours' ineffectual battling with the gale, the ships were forced to come about and run out to sea; and Jones suffered

the mortification of witnessing the failure of his enterprise, after having been within gunshot of the town that he had hoped to capture. As for the good people of Kirkaldy, they were convinced that their escape from the daring seamen was wholly due to the personal influence of their pastor with the Deity; and the worthy parson lived long afterward, ever held in most mighty veneration by the people of his flock.

Disappointed in this plan, Jones continued his cruise. Soon after he fell in with the "Alliance" and the "Vengeance"; and, while off Flamborough Head, the little squadron encountered a fleet of forty-one merchant ships, that, at the sight of the dreaded Yankee cruisers, crowded together like a flock of frightened pigeons, and made all sail for the shore; while two stately men-of-war—the "Serapis, forty-four," and the "Countess of Scarborough, twenty-two"—moved forward to give battle to the Americans.

Jones now stood upon the threshold of his greatest victory. His bold and chivalric mind had longed for battle, and recoiled from the less glorious pursuit of burning helpless merchantmen, and terrorizing small towns and villages. He now saw before him a chance to meet the enemy in a fair fight, muzzle to muzzle, and with no overpowering odds on either side. Although the Americans had six vessels to the Englishmen's two, the odds were in no wise in their favor. Two of the vessels were pilot-boats, which, of course, kept out of the battle. The "Vengeance," though ordered to render the larger vessels any possible assistance, kept out of the fight altogether, and even neglected to make any attempt to overhaul the flying band of merchantmen. As for the "Alliance," under the erratic Landais, she only entered the conflict at the last moment; and then her broadsides, instead of being delivered into the enemy, crashed through the already



THE ACTION BETWEEN THE "BON HOMME RICHARD" AND THE "SERAPIS," SEPTEMBER 23, 1779

shattered sides of the "Bon Homme Richard." Thus the actual combatants were the "Richard" with forty guns, against the "Serapis" with forty-four; and the "Pallas" with twenty-two guns, against the "Countess of Scarborough" with twenty-two.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening of a clear September day—the twenty-third—that the hostile vessels bore down upon each other, making rapid preparations for the impending battle. The sea was fast turning gray, as the deepening twilight robbed the sky of its azure hue. A brisk breeze was blowing, that filled out the bellying sails of the ships, and beat the waters into little waves capped with snowy foam. In the west the rosy tints of the autumnal sunset were still warm in the sky. Nature was in one of her most smiling moods, as these men with set faces, and hearts throbbing with the mingled emotions of fear and excitement, stood silent at their guns, or worked busily at the ropes of the great warships.

As soon as he became convinced of the character of the two English ships, Jones beat his crew to quarters, and signalled his consorts to form in line of battle. The people on the "Richard" went cheerfully to their guns; and though the ship was extremely short-handed, and crowded with prisoners, no voice was raised against giving immediate battle to the enemy. The actions of the other vessels of the American fleet, however, gave little promise of any aid from that quarter. When the enemy was first sighted, the swift-sailing "Alliance" dashed forward to reconnoitre. As she passed the "Pallas," Landais cried out, that, if the stranger proved to be a forty-four, the only course for the Americans was immediate flight. Evidently the result of his investigations convinced him that in flight lay his only hope of safety; for he quickly hauled off, and stood away from the enemy. The "Vengeance," too,

ran off to windward, leaving the "Richard" and the "Pallas" to bear the brunt of battle.

It was by this time quite dark, and the position of the ships was outlined by the rows of open portholes gleaming with the lurid light of the battle-lanterns. On each ship rested a stillness like that of death itself. The men stood at their guns silent and thoughtful. Sweet memories of home and loved ones mingled with fearful anticipations of death or of mangling wounds in the minds of each. The little lads whose duty in time of action it was to carry cartridges from the magazine to the gunners had ceased their boyish chatter, and stood nervously at their stations. Officers walked up and down the decks, speaking words of encouragement to the men, glancing sharply at primers and breechings to see that all was ready, and ever and anon stooping to peer through the porthole at the line of slowly moving lights that told of the approach of the enemy. On the quarter-deck, Paul Jones, with his officers about him, stood carefully watching the movements of the enemy through a night glass, giving occasionally a quiet order to the man at the wheel, and now and then sending an agile midshipman below with orders to the armorer, or aloft with orders for the sharpshooters posted in the tops.

As the night came on, the wind died away to a gentle breeze, that hardly ruffled the surface of the water, and urged the ships toward each other but sluggishly. As they came within pistol-shot of each other, bow to bow, and going on opposite tacks, a hoarse cry came from the deck of the "Serapis":

"What ship is that?"

"What is that you say?"

"What ship is that? Answer immediately, or I shall fire into you."

Instantly with a flash and roar both vessels opened

fire. The thunder of the broadsides reverberated over the waters; and the bright flash of the cannon, together with the pale light of the moon just rising, showed Flamborough Head crowded with multitudes who had come out to witness the grand yet awful spectacle of a naval duel.

The very first broadside seemed enough to wreck the fortunes of the "Richard." On her gun-deck were mounted six long eighteens, the only guns she carried that were of sufficient weight to be matched against the heavy ordnance of the "Serapis." At the very first discharge, two of these guns burst with frightful violence. Huge masses of iron were hurled in every direction, cutting through beams and stanchions, crashing through floors and bulkheads, and tearing through the agonized bodies of the men who served the guns. Hardly a man who was stationed on the gun-deck escaped unhurt in the storm of iron and splinters. Several huge blocks of iron crashed through the upper deck, injuring the people on the deck above, and causing the cry to be raised, that the magazine had blown up. This unhappy calamity not only rendered useless the whole battery of eighteen-pounders, thus forcing Jones to fight an eighteen-pounder frigate with a twelve-pounder battery, but it spread a panic among the men, who saw the dangers of explosion added to the peril they were in by reason of the enemy's continued fire.

Jones himself left the quarter-deck, and rushed forward among the men, cheering them on, and arousing them to renewed activity by his exertions. Now he would lend a hand at training some gun, now pull at a rope, or help a lagging powder-monkey on his way. His pluck and enthusiasm infused new life into the men; and they threw the heavy guns about like play-things, and cheered loudly as each shot told.

The two ships were at no time separated by a greater

distance than half a pistol-shot, and were continually manœuvring to cross each other's bows, and get in a raking broadside. In this attempt, they crossed from one to the other side of each other; so that now the port and now the starboard battery would be engaged. From the shore these evolutions were concealed under a dense cloud of smoke, and the spectators could only see the tops of the two vessels moving slowly about before the light breeze; while the lurid flashes of the cannon, and constant thunder of the broadsides, told of the deadly work going on. At a little distance were the "Countess of Scarborough" and the "Palas," linked in deadly combat, and adding the roar of their cannon to the general turmoil. It seemed to the watchers on the heights that war was coming very close to England.

The "Serapis" first succeeded in getting a raking position; and, as she slowly crossed her antagonist's bow, her guns were fired, loaded again, and again discharged—the heavy bolts crashing into the "Richard's" bow, and ranging aft, tearing the flesh of the brave fellows on the decks, and cutting through timbers and cordage in their frightful course. At this moment, the Americans almost despaired of the termination of the conflict. The "Richard" proved to be old and rotten, and the enemy's shot seemed to tear her timbers to pieces; while the "Serapis" was new, with timbers that withstood the shock of the balls like steel armor. Jones saw that in a battle with great guns he was sure to be the loser. He therefore resolved to board.

Soon the "Richard" made an attempt to cross the bows of the "Serapis," but not having way enough failed; and the "Serapis" ran foul of her, with her long bowsprit projecting over the stern of the American ship. Springing from the quarter-deck, Jones

with his own hands swung grappling-irons into the rigging of the enemy, and made the ships fast. As he bent to his work, he was a prominent target for every sharpshooter on the British vessel, and the bullets hummed thick about his ears; but he never flinched. His work done, he clambered back to the quarter-deck, and set about gathering the boarders. The two vessels swung alongside each other. The cannonading was redoubled, and the heavy ordnance of the "Serapis" told fearfully upon the "Richard." The American gunners were driven from their guns by the flying cloud of shot and splinters. Each party thought the other was about to board. The darkness and the smoke made all vision impossible; and the boarders on each vessel were crouched behind the bulwarks, ready to give a hot reception to their enemies. This suspense caused a temporary lull in the firing, and Captain Pearson of the "Serapis" shouted out through the sulphurous blackness:

"Have you struck your colors?"

"I have not yet begun to fight," replied Jones; and again the thunder of the cannon awakened the echoes on the distant shore. As the firing recommenced, the two ships broke away and drifted apart. Again the "Serapis" sought to get a raking position; but by this time Jones had determined that his only hope lay in boarding. Terrible had been the execution on his ship. The cockpit was filled with the wounded. The mangled remains of the dead lay thick about the decks. The timbers of the ship were greatly shattered, and her cordage was so badly cut that skilful manœuvring was impossible. Many shot-holes were beneath the water-line, and the hold was rapidly filling. Therefore, Jones determined to run down his enemy, and get out his boarders, at any cost.

Soon the two vessels were foul again. Captain Pear-

son, knowing that his advantage lay in long-distance fighting, strove to break away. Jones bent all his energies to the task of keeping the ships together. Meantime the battle raged fiercely. Jones himself, in his official report of the battle, thus describes the course of the fight:

I directed the fire of one of the three cannon against the main-mast with double-headed shot, while the other two were exceedingly well served with grape and canister shot, to silence the enemy's musketry, and clear her decks, which was at last effected. The enemy were, as I have since understood, on the instant for calling for quarter, when the cowardice or treachery of three of my under officers induced them to call to the enemy. The English commodore asked me if I demanded quarter; and I having answered him in the negative, they renewed the battle with double fury. They were unable to stand the deck; but the fury of their cannon, especially the lower battery, which was entirely formed of eighteen-pounders, was incessant. Both ships were set on fire in various places, and the scene was dreadful beyond the reach of language. To account for the timidity of my three under officers (I mean the gunner, the carpenter, and the master-at-arms), I must observe that the two first were slightly wounded; and as the ship had received various shots under water, and one of the pumps being shot away, the carpenter expressed his fear that she would sink, and the other two concluded that she was sinking, which occasioned the gunner to run aft on the poop, without my knowledge, to strike the colors. Fortunately for me a cannon-ball had done that before by carrying away the ensign staff: he was, therefore, reduced to the necessity of sinking—as he supposed—or of calling for quarter; and he preferred the latter.

Indeed, the petty officers were little to be blamed for considering the condition of the "Richard" hopeless. The great guns of the "Serapis," with their muzzles not twenty feet away, were hurling solid shot and grape through the flimsy shell of the American ship. So close together did the two ships come at times, that the rammers were sometimes thrust into the portholes of the opposite ship in loading. When the ships first swung together, the lower ports of the "Serapis" were closed to prevent the Americans boarding through them.

But in the heat of the conflict the ports were quickly blown off, and the iron throats of the great guns again protruded, and dealt out their messages of death. How frightful was the scene! In the two great ships were more than seven hundred men, their eyes lighted with the fire of hatred, their faces blackened with powder or made ghastly by streaks of blood. Cries of pain, yells of rage, prayers, and curses rose shrill above the thunderous monotone of the cannonade. Both ships were on fire; and the black smoke of the conflagration, mingled with the gray gunpowder smoke, and lighted up by the red flashes of the cannonade, added to the terrible picturesqueness of the scene.

The "Richard" seemed like a spectre ship, so shattered was her framework. From the main-mast to the stern post, her timbers above the water-line were shot away, a few blackened posts alone preventing the upper deck from falling. Through this ruined shell swept the shot of the "Serapis," finding little to impede their flight save human flesh and bone. Great streams of water were pouring into the hold. The pitiful cries of nearly two hundred prisoners aroused the compassion of an officer, who ran below and liberated them. Driven from the hold by the inpouring water, these unhappy men ran to the deck, only to be swept down by the storm of cannon-shot and bullets. Fire, too, encompassed them; and the flames were so fast sweeping down upon the magazine, that Captain Jones ordered the powder-kegs to be brought up and thrown into the sea. At this work, and at the pumps, the prisoners were kept employed until the end of the action.

But though the heavy guns of the "Serapis" had it all their own way below, shattering the hull of the "Richard," and driving the Yankee gunners from their quarters, the conflict, viewed from the tops, was

not so one-sided. The Americans crowded on the fore-castle and in the tops, where they continued the battle with musketry and hand-grenades, with such murderous effect that the British were driven entirely from the upper deck. Once a party of about one hundred picked men, mustered below by Captain Pearson, rushed to the upper deck of the "Serapis," and thence made a descent upon the deck of the "Richard," firing pistols, brandishing cutlasses, and yelling like demons. But the Yankee tars were ready for them at that game, and gave the boarders so spirited a reception with pikes and cutlasses, that they were ready enough to swarm over the bulwarks, and seek again the comparative safety of their own ship.

But all this time, though the Americans were making a brave and desperate defence, the tide of battle was surely going against them. Though they held the deck of the "Richard" secure against all comers, yet the Englishmen were cutting the ship away from beneath them, with continued heavy broadsides. Suddenly the course of battle was changed, and victory took her stand with the Americans, all through the daring and coolness of one man—no officer, but a humble jacky.

The rapid and accurate fire of the sharpshooters on the "Richard" had driven all the riflemen of the "Serapis" from their posts in the tops. Seeing this, the Americans swarmed into the rigging of their own ship, and from that elevated station poured down a destructive fire of hand-grenades upon the decks of the enemy. The sailors on the deck of the "Richard" seconded this attack, by throwing the same missiles through the open ports of the enemy.

At last one American topman, filling a bucket with grenades, and hanging it on his left arm, clambered out on the yard-arm of the "Richard," that stretched far out over the deck of the British ship. Cautiously

the brave fellow crept out on the slender spar. His comrades below watched his progress, while the sharpshooters kept a wary eye on the enemy, lest some watchful rifleman should pick off the adventurous blue-jacket. Little by little the nimble sailor crept out on the yard, until he was over the crowded gun-deck of the "Serapis." Then, lying at full length on the spar, and somewhat protected by it, he began to shower his missiles upon the enemy's gun-deck. Great was the execution done by each grenade; but at last, one better aimed than the rest fell through the main hatch to the main deck. There was a flash, then a succession of quick explosions; a great sheet of flame gushed up through the hatchway, and a chorus of cries told of some frightful tragedy enacted below.

It seemed that the powder-boys of the "Serapis" had been too active in bringing powder to the guns, and, instead of bringing cartridges as needed, had kept one charge in advance of the demand; so that behind every gun stood a cartridge, making a line of cartridges on the deck from bow to stern. Several cartridges had been broken, so that much loose powder lay upon the deck. This was fired by the discharge of the hand-grenade, and communicated the fire to the cartridges, which exploded in rapid succession, horribly burning scores of men. More than twenty men were killed instantly; and so great was the flame and the force of the explosion, that many of them were left with nothing on but the collars and wristbands of their shirts, and the waistbands of their trousers.

Captain Pearson in his official report of the battle, speaking of this occurrence, says: "A hand-grenade being thrown in at one of the lower ports, a cartridge of powder was set on fire, the flames of which running from cartridge to cartridge all the way aft, blew up the whole of the people and officers that were quartered

abast the main-mast; from which unfortunate circumstance those guns were rendered useless for the remainder of the action, and I fear that the greater part of the people will lose their lives."

This event changed the current of the battle. The English were hemmed between decks by the fire of the American topmen, and they found that not even then were they protected from the fiery hail of hand-grenades. The continual pounding of double-headed shot from a gun which Jones had trained upon the main-mast of the enemy had finally cut away that spar; and it fell with a crash upon the deck, bringing down spars and rigging with it. Flames were rising from the tarred cordage, and spreading to the framework of the ship. The Americans saw victory within their grasp.

But at this moment a new and most unsuspected enemy appeared upon the scene. The "Alliance," which had stood aloof during the heat of the conflict, now appeared, and, after firing a few shots into the "Serapis," ranged slowly down along the "Richard," pouring a murderous fire of grapeshot into the already shattered ship. Jones thus tells the story of this treacherous and wanton assault:

I now thought that the battle was at an end. But, to my utter astonishment, he discharged a broadside full into the stern of the "Bon Homme Richard." We called to him for God's sake to forbear. Yet he passed along the off-side of the ship and continued firing. There was no possibility of his mistaking the enemy's ship for the "Bon Homme Richard," there being the most essential difference in their appearance and construction. Besides, it was then full moonlight; and the sides of the "Bon Homme Richard" were all black, and the sides of the enemy's ship were yellow. Yet, for the greater security, I showed the signal for our reconnoissance, by putting out three lanterns,—one at the bow, one at the stern, and one at the middle, in a horizontal line.

Every one cried that he was firing into the wrong ship, but nothing availed. He passed around, firing into the "Bon Homme

Richard," head, stern, and broadside, and by one of his volleys killed several of my best men, and mortally wounded a good officer of the forecastle. My situation was truly deplorable. The "Bon Homme Richard" received several shots under the water from the "Alliance." The leak gained on the pumps, and the fire increased much on board both ships. Some officers entreated me to strike, of whose courage and sense I entertain a high opinion. I would not, however, give up the point.

Fortunately Landais did not persist in his cowardly attack upon his friends in the almost sinking ship, but sailed off, and allowed the "Richard" to continue her life-and-death struggle with her enemy. The struggle was not now of long duration; for Captain Pearson, seeing that his ship was a perfect wreck, and that the fire was gaining headway, hauled down his colors with his own hands, since none of his men could be persuaded to brave the fire from the tops of the "Richard."

As the proud emblem of Great Britain fluttered down, Lieutenant Richard Dale turned to Captain Jones, and asked permission to board the prize. Receiving an affirmative answer, he jumped on the gunwale, seized the mainbrace-pendant, and swung himself upon the quarter-deck of the captured ship. Midshipman Mayrant, with a large party of sailors, followed. So great was the confusion on the "Serapis," that few of the Englishmen knew that the ship had been surrendered. As Mayrant came aboard, he was mistaken for the leader of a boarding-party, and run through the thigh with a pike.

Captain Pearson was found standing alone upon the quarter-deck, contemplating with a sad face the shattered condition of his once noble ship, and the dead bodies of his brave fellows lying about the decks. Stepping up to him, Lieutenant Dale said:

"Sir, I have orders to send you on board the ship alongside."

At this moment, the first lieutenant of the "Serapis" came up hastily, and inquired:

"Has the enemy struck her flag?"

"No, sir," answered Dale. "On the contrary, you have struck to us."

Turning quickly to his commander, the English lieutenant asked:

"Have you struck, sir?"

"Yes, I have," was the brief reply.

"I have nothing more to say," remarked the officer, and turning about was in the act of going below, when Lieutenant Dale stopped him, saying:

"It is my duty to request you, sir, to accompany Captain Pearson on board the ship alongside."

"If you will first permit me to go below," responded the other, "I will silence the firing of the lower deck guns."

"This cannot be permitted," was the response; and, silently bowing his head, the lieutenant followed his chief to the victorious ship, while two midshipmen went below to stop the firing.

Lieutenant Dale remained in command of the "Serapis." Seating himself on the binnacle, he ordered the lashings which had bound the two ships throughout the bloody conflict to be cut. Then the head-sails were braced back, and the wheel put down. But, as the ship had been anchored at the beginning of the battle, she refused to answer either helm or canvas. Vastly astounded at this, Dale leaped from the binnacle; but his legs refused to support him, and he fell heavily to the deck. His followers sprang to his aid; and it was found that the lieutenant had been severely wounded in the leg by a splinter, but had fought out the battle without ever noticing his hurt.

So ended this memorable battle. But the feelings

of pride and exultation so natural to a victor died away in the breast of the American captain as he looked about the scene of wreck and carnage. On all sides lay the mutilated bodies of the gallant fellows who had so bravely stood to their guns amid the storm of death-dealing missiles. There they lay, piled one on top of the other,—some with their agonized writhings caught and fixed by death; others calm and peaceful, as though sleeping. Powder-boys, young and tender, lay by the side of grizzled old seamen. In his journal Captain Jones wrote:

A person must have been an eye-witness to form a just idea of the tremendous scene of carnage, wreck, and ruin, that everywhere appeared. Humanity cannot but recoil from the prospect of such finished horror, and lament that war should produce such fatal consequences.

But worse than the appearance of the main deck was the scene in the cockpit and along the gun-deck, which had been converted into a temporary hospital. Here lay the wounded, ranged in rows along the deck. Moans and shrieks of agony were heard on every side. The tramp of men on the decks overhead, and the creaking of the timbers of the water-logged ship, added to the cries of the wounded, made a perfect bedlam of the place.

It did not take long to discover that the "Bon Homme Richard" was a complete wreck, and in a sinking condition. The gallant old craft had kept afloat while the battle was being fought; but now, that the victory had remained with her, she had given up the struggle against the steadily encroaching waves. The carpenters who had explored the hold came on deck with long faces, and reported that nothing could be done to stop the great holes made by the shot of the "Serapis." Therefore Jones determined to re-

move his crew and all the wounded to the "Serapis," and abandon the noble "Richard" to her fate. Accordingly, all available hands were put at the pumps, and the work of transferring the wounded was begun. Slings were rigged over the side; and the poor shattered bodies were gently lowered into the boats awaiting them, and, on reaching the "Serapis," were placed tenderly in cots ranged along the main deck. All night the work went on; and by ten o'clock the next morning there were left on the "Richard" only a few sailors, who alternately worked at the pumps, and fought the steadily encroaching flames.

For Jones did not intend to desert the good old ship without a struggle to save her, even though both fire and water were warring against her. Not until the morning dawned did the Americans fully appreciate how shattered was the hulk that stood between them and a watery grave. Fenimore Cooper, the pioneer historian of the United States navy, writes:

When the day dawned, an examination was made into the situation of the "Richard." Aft on a line with those guns of the "Serapis" that had not been disabled by the explosion, the timbers were found to be nearly all beaten in, or beaten out,—for in this respect there was little difference between the two sides of the ship,—and it was said that her poop and upper decks would have fallen into the gun-room, but for a few buttocks that had been missed. Indeed, so large was the vacuum, that most of the shot fired from this part of the "Serapis," at the close of the action, must have gone through the "Richard" without touching any thing. The rudder was cut from the stern post, and the transoms were nearly driven out of her. All the after-part of the ship, in particular, that was below the quarter-deck was torn to pieces; and nothing had saved those stationed on the quarter-deck but the impossibility of sufficiently elevating guns that almost touched their object.

Despite the terribly shattered condition of the ship, her crew worked manfully to save her. But, after fighting the flames and working the pumps all day, they

were reluctantly forced to abandon the good ship to her fate. It was about nine o'clock at night that the hopelessness of the task became evident. The "Richard" rolled heavily from side to side. The sea was up to her lower portholes. At each roll the water gushed in and swashed through the hatchways. At ten o'clock, with a last dying surge, the shattered hulk plunged to her final resting-place, carrying with her the bodies of her dead. They had died the noblest of all deaths—the death of a patriot killed in doing battle for his country. They received the grandest of all burials—the burial of a sailor who follows his ship to her grave, on the hard, white sand, in the calm depths of the ocean.

How many were there that went down with the ship? History does not accurately state. Captain Jones himself was never able to tell how great was the number of dead upon his ship. The most careful estimate puts the number at forty-two. Of the wounded on the American ship, there were about forty. All these were happily removed from the "Richard" before she sunk.

On the "Serapis" the loss was much greater; but here, too, history is at fault, in that no official returns of the killed and wounded have been preserved. Captain Jones's estimate, which is probably nearly correct, put the loss of the English ship at about a hundred killed, and an equal number wounded.

The sinking of the "Richard" left the "Serapis" crowded with wounded of both nations, prisoners, and the remnant of the crew of the sunken ship. No time was lost in getting the ship in navigable shape, and in clearing away the traces of the battle. The bodies of the dead were thrown overboard. The decks were scrubbed and sprinkled with hot vinegar. The sound of the hammer and the saw was heard on every hand, as the carpenters stopped the leaks, patched the deck,

and rigged new spars in place of those shattered by the "Richard's" fire. All three of the masts had gone by the board. Jury masts were rigged; and with small sails stretched on these the ship beat about the ocean, the plaything of the winds. Her consorts had left her. Landais, seeing no chance to rob Jones of the honor of the victory, had taken the "Alliance" to other waters. The "Pallas" had been victorious in her contest with the "Countess of Scarborough"; and, as soon as the issue of the conflict between the "Bon Homme Richard" and the "Serapis" had become evident, she made off with her prize, intent upon gaining a friendly port. The "Serapis," after ten days of drifting, finally ran into Texel, in the north of Holland.

The next year was one of comparative inactivity for Jones. He enjoyed for a time the praise of all friends of the revolting colonies. He was the lion of Paris. Then came the investigation into the action of Landais at the time of the great battle. Though his course at that time was one of open treachery, inspired by his wish to have Jones strike to the "Serapis," that he might have the honor of capturing both ships, Landais escaped any punishment at the hands of his French compatriots. But he was relieved of the command of the "Alliance," which was given to Jones. Highly incensed at this action, the erratic Frenchman incited the crew of the "Alliance" to open mutiny, and, taking command of the ship himself, left France and sailed for America, leaving Commodore Jones in the lurch. On his arrival at Philadelphia, Landais strove to justify his action by blackening the character of Jones, but failed in this, and was dismissed the service. His actions should be regarded with some charity, for the man was doubtless of unsound mind. His insanity became even more evident after his dismissal from the navy; and from that time, until the time of his death,

his eccentricities made him generally regarded as one mentally unsound.

Jones is the one great character in the naval history of the Revolution. He is the first heroic figure in American naval annals. Not until years after his death did men begin to know him at his true worth. He was too often looked upon as a man of no patriotism, but wholly mercenary; courageous, but only with the daring of a pirate. Not until he had died a lonely death, estranged from the country he had so nobly served, did men come to know Paul Jones as a model naval officer, high-minded in his patriotism, pure in his life, elevated in his sentiments, and as courageous as a lion.

CHAPTER V

Britain's Great Naval Force—Biddle and Tucker—An Envoy in Battle—The Cruise of the "Raleigh"—The Taking of New Providence—The Work of Privateers and Colonial Cruisers—The "Alliance" and Captain Barry.

IN giving this continuous account of the services of John Paul Jones to the American Navy it has been necessary to depart somewhat from the strict order of time. Jones's work ended in 1780. Let us go back to 1777 and take up with that date the story of the war upon the ocean. In the main it was a sputtering warfare, made up of raids upon merchant shipping and battles between small vessels. Yet the effect of such a maritime campaign upon the enemy—particularly an enemy like Great Britain, whose merchant vessels crowded the seas—was not to be despised. It compelled the detachment from active service of scores of British war vessels to convoy the fleets of commerce. It ran up the rates of insurance, paralyzed trade, and caused widespread distress. Save for the efforts of Jones, who alone among American commanders operated in European waters, there was little in this period, or indeed during the Revolution, greatly to elate the friends of the American Navy, except as we keep in view the great disparity between the two combatants. Accordingly, for the remainder of this survey of the work of the navy during the Revolution only the most notable actions, or the most picturesque incidents, will be considered.

The year 1777 witnessed many notable naval events. Hostilities along the seaboard became more lively. New vessels were put into commission. England dis-

patched a larger naval armament to crush her rebellious colonies. The records of the admiralty show that at the beginning of that year Parliament voted to the navy forty-five thousand men—almost the exact number in our navy in 1909. The Americans were able to array against this huge force only some four thousand, scattered upon thirteen small vessels-of-war.

Among the first vessels to get to sea was the "Randolph," a new frigate commanded by Nicholas Biddle, which sailed from Philadelphia in February. Her cruise was luckless from start to fatal finish. A storm took out her masts; an attempted mutiny on the part of some forty British prisoners failed, but so disorganized the crew that it was determined to put into Charleston to refit and get rid of the mutineers.

But a few days were spent in port. Getting to sea again, the "Randolph" fell in with the "True Briton," a twenty-gun ship, flying the British colors. Though the captain of the "True Briton" had often boasted of what he would do should he encounter the "Randolph," his courage then failed him, and he fled. The "Randolph" gave chase, and, proving to be a speedy ship, soon overhauled the prize, which struck without waiting for a volley. Three other vessels that had been cruising with the "True Briton" were also captured, and with her rich prizes the "Randolph" returned proudly to Charleston. Here her usefulness ceased for a time; for a superior force of British men-of-war appeared off the harbor, and by them the "Randolph" was blockaded for the remainder of the season.

On the 7th of March, 1778, the lookouts on the smaller vessels saw a signal thrown out from the mast-head of the "Randolph," which announced a sail in sight. Chase was at once given; and by four o'clock she was near enough for the Americans to see that she was a large ship, and apparently a man-of-war.

About eight o'clock the stranger was near enough the squadron for them to make out that she was a heavy frigate.

The Englishman was not slow to suspect the character of the vessels with which he had fallen in, and firing a shot across the bows of the "Moultrie," demanded her name.

"The 'Polly' of New York," was the response.

Leaving the "Moultrie" unmolested, the stranger ranged up alongside the "Randolph," and ordered her to show her colors. This Biddle promptly did; and as the American flag went fluttering to the fore, the ports of the "Randolph" were thrown open, and a broadside poured into the hull of the Englishman. The stranger was not slow in replying, and the action became hot and deadly. Captain Biddle was wounded in the thigh early in the battle. As he fell to the deck, his officers crowded about him, thinking that he was killed; but he encouraged them to return to their posts, and, ordering a chair to be placed on the quarter-deck, remained on deck, giving orders, and cheering on his men. It is said that Captain Biddle was wounded by a shot from the "Moultrie," which flew wide of its intended mark.

For twenty minutes the battle raged, and there was no sign of weakening on the part of either contestant. Suddenly the sound of the cannonade was deadened by a thunderous roar. The people on the other ships saw a huge column of fire and smoke rise where the "Randolph" had floated. The English vessel was thrown violently on her beam-ends. The sky was darkened with flying timbers and splinters, which fell heavily into the sea. The "Randolph" had blown up. A spark, a red-hot shot, some fiery object, had penetrated her magazine, and she was annihilated.

The disaster which destroyed the "Randolph" came

near being the end of the "Yarmouth," her antagonist. The two battling ships were close together; so close, in fact, that after the explosion Captain Morgan of the "Fair American" hailed the "Yarmouth" to ask how Captain Biddle was. The English ship was fairly covered with bits of the flying wreck. Some heavy pieces of timber falling from the skies badly shattered her main-deck. An American ensign, closely rolled up, fell on her forecastle, not even singed by the fiery ordeal through which it had passed.

So died Captain Nicholas Biddle, blown to atoms by the explosion of his ship in the midst of battle. Though but a young officer, not having completed his twenty-seventh year, he left an enduring name in the naval annals of his country. Though his service was short, the fame he won was great.

Among the more notable commanders who did good service on the sea was Captain Samuel Tucker, who was put in command of the frigate "Boston" in the latter part of the year 1777. Tucker was an old and tried seaman, and is furthermore one of the most picturesque figures in the naval history of the Revolution.

When the Revolution broke out, Samuel Tucker was in London. Being offered by a recruiting officer a commission in either the army or navy, if he would consent to serve "his gracious Majesty," Tucker very rashly responded, "Hang his gracious Majesty! Do you think I would serve against my country?"

Soon a hue and cry was out for Tucker. He was charged with treason, and fled into the country to the house of a tavern-keeper whom he knew, who sheltered him until he could make his escape from England.

Hardly had he arrived in America, when General Washington commissioned him captain of the "Franklin," and instructed him to proceed directly to sea.

In the "Franklin" Captain Tucker did some most

efficient work. His name appears constantly in the letters of General Washington, and in the State papers making up the American archives, as having sent in valuable prizes. At one time we read of the capture of a "brigantine from Scotland, worth fifteen thousand pounds sterling"; again, of six gunboats, and of brigs laden with wine and fruit. During the year 1776, he took not less than thirty—and probably a few more—ships, brigs, and smaller vessels. Nor were all these vessels taken without some sharp fighting.

Of one battle Tucker himself speaks in one of his letters. First telling how his wife made the colors for his ship, "the field of which was white, and the union was green, made of cloth of her own purchasing, and at her own expense," he goes on to write of one of his battles:

Those colors I wore in honor of the country,—which has so nobly rewarded me for my past services,—and the love of their maker, until I fell in with Col. Archibald Campbell in the ship "George," and brig "Arabella," transports with about two hundred and eighty Highland troops on board, of Gen. Frazier's corps. About 10 P.M. a severe conflict ensued; which held about two hours and twenty minutes. I conquered them with great carnage on their side, it being in the night, and my small bark, about seventy tons burden, being very low in the water, I received no damage in loss of men, but lost a complete set of new sails by the passing of their balls; then the white field and pine-tree union were riddled to atoms. I was then immediately supplied with a new suit of sails, and a new suit of colors, made of canvas and bunting of my own prize-goods.

Another time, during the same year, Tucker took two British ships near Marblehead. So near was the scene of action to the house of Captain Tucker, that his wife and her sister, hearing the sound of cannonading, ascended a high hill in the vicinity, and from that point viewed the action through a spy-glass.

Captain Tucker kept the sea in the "Franklin" until late in the winter. When finally the cold weather

and high winds forced him to put his ship out of commission, he went to his home at Marblehead. He remained there but a short time; for in March, 1777, he was put in command of the "Boston," a frigate of twenty-four guns. In this vessel he cruised during the year with varying success.

Early in February, 1778, Captain Tucker was ordered to carry John Adams to France as United States Envoy. Impressed with the gravity of his charge he chose a course which he hoped would keep him clear of the horde of British cruisers then patrolling the American coast. But in so doing he fell in with a natural enemy, which came near proving fatal. A terrific thunderstorm, gradually growing into a tornado, crossed the path of the ship. The ocean was lashed into waves mountain high. The crash of the thunder rent the sky. A stroke of lightning struck the mainmast, and ripped up the deck, narrowly missing the magazine. The ship sprung a leak; and the grewsome sound of the pumps mingled with the roar of the waves, and the shrieking of the winds. For several days the stormy weather continued. Then followed a period of calm, which the captain well employed in repairing the rigging, and exercising the men with the guns and small arms. Many ships had been sighted, and some, evidently men-of-war, had given chase; but the "Boston" succeeded in showing them all a clean pair of heels.

"What would you do," said Mr. Adams one day, as he stood with the captain watching three ships that were making desperate efforts to overhaul the "Boston," "if you could not escape, and they should attack you?"

"As the first is far in advance of the others, I should carry her by boarding, leading the boarders myself," was the response. "I should take her; for no doubt

a majority of her crew, being pressed men, would turn to and join me. Having taken her, I should be matched, and could fight the other two."

Such language as this coming from many men would be considered mere foolhardy boasting. But Tucker was a man not given to brag. Indeed, he was apt to be very laconic in speaking of his exploits. A short time after his escape from the three ships, he fell in with an English armed vessel of no small force, and captured her. His only comment on the action in his journal reads: "I fired a gun, and they returned three; and down went the colors."

John Adams, however, told a more graphic story of this capture. Tucker, as soon as he saw an armed vessel in his path, hastily called his crew to order, and bore down upon her. When the roll of the drum, calling the people to quarters, resounded through the ship, Mr. Adams seized a musket, and took his stand with the marines. Captain Tucker, seeing him there, requested him to go below, and upon his desire being disregarded, put his hand upon the envoy's shoulder, and in a tone of authority said:

"Mr. Adams, I am commanded by the Continental Congress to deliver you safe in France, and you must go below."

The envoy smilingly complied, and just at that moment the enemy let fly her broadside. The shot flew through the rigging, doing but little damage. Though the guns of the "Boston" were shotted, and the gunners stood at their posts with smoking match-stocks, Captain Tucker gave no order to fire, but seemed intent upon the manœuvres of the ships. The eager blue-jackets begun to murmur, and the chorus of questions and oaths was soon so great that the attention of Tucker was attracted. He looked at the row of eager faces on the gun-deck, and shouted out:



By courtesy of Hon. Theo. Sutro

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FIRST RECOGNITION OF THE AMERICAN FLAG BY A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT

(In the Harbor of Quiberon, France, February 13, 1778)

"Hold on, my men! I wish to save that egg without breaking the shell."

Soon after, Tucker brought his broadside to bear on the stern of the enemy, and she struck without more ado. She proved to be an armed ship, the "Martha."

After this encounter, nothing more of moment occurred on the voyage, and the "Boston" reached Bordeaux, and landed her distinguished passenger in safety. Two months later she left Bordeaux, in company with a fleet of twenty sail, one of which was the "Ranger," formerly commanded by Paul Jones. With these vessels he cruised for a time in European waters, but returned to the American coast in the autumn. His services for the rest of that year, and the early part of 1779, we must pass over hastily, though many were the prizes that fell into his clutches.

Many anecdotes are told of Tucker. His shrewdness, originality, and daring made him a favorite theme for story-tellers. But, unhappily, the anecdotes have generally no proof of their truth. One or two, however, told by Captain Tucker's biographer, Mr. John H. Sheppard, will not be out of place here.

In one the story is told that Tucker fell in with a British frigate which he knew to be sent in search of him. Showing the English flag, he sailed boldly towards the enemy, and in answer to her hail said he was Captain Gordon of the English navy, out in search of the "Boston," commanded by the rebel Tucker.

"I'll carry him to New York, dead or alive," said Tucker.

"Have you seen him?" was asked.

"Well, I've heard of him," was the response; "and they say he is a hard customer."

All this time Tucker had been manœuvring to secure a raking position. Behind the closed ports of the "Boston," the men stood at their guns, ready for the

word of command. Just as the American had secured the position desired, a sailor in the tops of the British vessel cried out:

"That is surely Tucker; we shall have a devil of a smell directly."

Hearing this, Tucker ordered the American flag hoisted, and the ports thrown open. Hailing his astonished foe, he cried:

"The time I proposed talking with you is ended. This is the 'Boston,' frigate. I am Samuel Tucker, but no rebel. Fire, or strike your flag."

The Englishman saw he had no alternative but to strike. This he did without firing a gun. The vessel, though not named in the anecdote, was probably the "Pole," of the capture of which Tucker frequently speaks in his letters.

While the Yankee tars on river and harbor duty were thus getting their share of fighting, there was plenty of daring work being done on the high seas. One of the most important cruises of the year was that of the "Raleigh" and the "Alfred." The "Raleigh" was one of the twelve-pounder frigates built under the naval Act of 1775. With her consort the "Alfred," she left the American coast in the summer of 1777, bound for France, in search of naval stores that were there awaiting transportation to the United States. Both vessels were short-handed.

On the 2d of September the two vessels overhauled and captured the snow "Nancy," from England, bound for the West Indies. Her captain reported that he had sailed from the West Indies with a fleet of sixty merchantmen, under the convoy of four small men-of-war, the "Camel," the "Druid," the "Weasel," and the "Grasshopper." The poor sailing qualities of the "Nancy" had forced her to drop behind, and the fleet was then about a day in advance of her.

Crowding on all canvas, the two American ships set out in hot pursuit. From the captain of the "Nancy," Captain Thompson of the "Raleigh" had obtained all the signals in use in the fleet of Indiamen. The next morning the fleet was made out; and the "Raleigh" and the "Alfred" exchanged signals, as though they were part of the convoy. They hung about the outskirts of the fleet until dark, planning, when the night should fall, to make a dash into the enemy's midst, and cut out the chief armed vessel.

But at nightfall the wind changed, so that the plan of the Americans was defeated. At daylight, however, the wind veered round and freshened, so that the "Raleigh," crowding on more sail, was soon in the very centre of the enemy's fleet. The "Alfred," unfortunately, being unable to carry so great a spread of canvas, was left behind; and the "Raleigh" remained to carry out alone her daring adventure.

The "Raleigh" boldly steered straight into the midst of the British merchantmen, exchanging signals with some, and hailing others. Her ports were lowered, and her guns on deck housed, so that there appeared about her nothing to indicate her true character. Having cruised about amid the merchantmen, she drew up alongside the nearest man-of-war, and when within pistol-shot, suddenly ran up her flag, threw open her ports, and commanded the enemy to strike.

All was confusion on board the British vessel. Her officers had never for a moment suspected the "Raleigh" of being other than one of their own fleet. While they stood aghast, not even keeping the vessel on her course, the "Raleigh" poured in a broadside. The British responded faintly with a few guns. Deliberately the Americans let fly another broadside, which did great execution. The enemy were driven from their guns, but doggedly refused to strike, hold-

ing out, doubtless, in the hope that the cannonade might draw to their assistance some of the other armed ships accompanying the fleet.

While the unequal combat was raging, a heavy squall came rushing over the water. The driving sheets of rain shut in the combatants, and only by the thunders of the cannonade could the other vessels tell that a battle was being fought in their midst.

When the squall had passed by, the affrighted merchantmen were seen scudding in every direction, like a school of flying-fish into whose midst some rapacious shark or dolphin has intruded himself. But the three men-of-war, with several armed West-Indiamen in their wake, were fast bearing down upon the combatants, with the obvious intention of rescuing their comrade, and punishing the audacious Yankee.

The odds against Thompson were too great; and after staying by his adversary until the last possible moment, and pouring broadside after broadside into her, he abandoned the fight and rejoined the "Alfred." The two ships hung on the flanks of the fleet for some days, in the hopes of enticing two of the men-of-war out to join in battle. But all was to no avail, and the Americans were forced to content themselves with the scant glory won in the incomplete action of the "Raleigh." Her adversary proved to be the "Druid," twenty, which suffered severely from the "Raleigh's" repeated broadsides, having six killed and twenty-six wounded; of the wounded, five died immediately after the battle.

As usual the year's operations were opened by an exploit of one of the smaller cruisers. This was the United States sloop-of-war "Providence," a trig little vessel, mounting only twelve four-pounders, and carrying a crew of but fifty men. But she was in command of a daring seaman, Captain Rathburne, and she opened

the year's hostilities with an exploit worthy of Paul Jones.

Off the southeastern coast of Florida, in that archipelago or collection of groups of islands known collectively as the West Indies, lies the small island of New Providence. Here in 1778 was a small British colony. The well-protected harbor, and the convenient location of the island, made it a favorite place for the rendezvous of British naval vessels. Indeed, it bid fair to become, what Nassau is to-day, the chief British naval station on the American coast. In 1778 the little seaport had a population of about one thousand people.

With his little vessel, and her puny battery of four-pounders, Captain Rathburne determined to undertake the capture of New Providence. Only the highest daring, approaching even recklessness, could have conceived such a plan. The harbor was defended by a fort of no mean power. There was always one British armed vessel, and often more, lying at anchor under the guns of the fort. Two hundred of the people of the town were able-bodied men, able to bear arms. How, then, were the Yankees, with their puny force, to hope for success? This query Rathburne answered, "By dash and daring."

It was about eleven o'clock on the night of the 27th of January, 1778, that the "Providence" cast anchor in a sheltered cove near the entrance to the harbor of New Providence. Twenty-five of her crew were put ashore, and being reinforced by a few American prisoners kept upon the island, made a descent upon Fort Nassau from its landward side. The sentries dozing at their posts were easily overpowered, and the garrison was aroused from its peaceful slumbers by the cheers of the Yankee blue-jackets as they came tumbling in over the ramparts. A rocket sent up from the fort

announced the victory to the "Providence," and she came in and cast anchor near the fort.

When morning broke, the Americans saw a large sixteen-gun ship lying at anchor in the harbor, together with five sail that looked suspiciously like captured American merchantmen. The proceedings of the night had been quietly carried on, and the crew of the armed vessel had no reason to suspect that the condition of affairs on shore had been changed in any way during the night. But at daybreak a boat carrying four men put off from the shore, and made for the armed ship; and at the same time a flag was flung out from the flag-staff of the fort,—not the familiar scarlet flag of Great Britain, but the almost unknown Stars and Stripes of the United States.

The sleepy sailors on the armed vessel rubbed their eyes; and while they were staring at the strange piece of bunting, there came a hail from a boat alongside, and an American officer clambered over the rail. He curtly told the captain of the privateer that the fort was in the hands of the Americans, and called upon him to surrender his vessel forthwith. Resistance was useless; for the heavy guns of Fort Nassau were trained upon the British ship, and could blow her out of the water. The visitor's arguments proved to be unanswerable; and the captain of the privateer surrendered his vessel, which was taken possession of by the Americans; while her crew of forty-five men was ordered into confinement in the dungeons of the fort which had so lately held captive Americans. Other boarding parties were then sent to the other vessels in the harbor, which proved to be American craft, captured by the British sloop-of-war "Grayton."

At sunrise the sleeping town showed signs of reviving life, and a party of the audacious Yankees marched down to the house of the governor. That functionary

was found in bed, and in profound ignorance of the events of the night. The Americans broke the news to him none too gently, and demanded the keys of the disused fortress on the opposite side of the harbor from Fort Nassau. For a time the governor was inclined to demur; but the determined attitude of the Americans soon persuaded him that he was a prisoner, though in his own house, and he delivered the keys. Thereupon the Americans marched through the streets of the city, around the harbor's edge to the fort, spiked the guns, and carrying with them the powder and small arms, marched back to Fort Nassau.

But by this time it was ten o'clock, and the whole town was aroused. The streets were crowded with people eagerly discussing the invasion. The timid ones were busily packing up their goods to fly into the country; while the braver ones were hunting for weapons, and organizing for an attack upon the fort held by the Americans. Fearing an outbreak, Captain Rathburne sent out a flag of truce, making proclamation to all the inhabitants of New Providence, that the Americans would do no damage to the persons or property of the people of the island unless compelled so to do in self-defence. This pacified the more temperate of the inhabitants; but the hotheads, to the number of about two hundred, assembled before Fort Nassau, and threatened to attack it. But, when they summoned Rathburne to surrender, that officer leaped upon the parapet, and coolly told the assailants to come on.

"We can beat you back easily," said he. "And, by the Eternal, if you fire a gun at us, we'll turn the guns of the fort on your town, and lay it in ruins."

This bold defiance disconcerted the enemy; and, after some consultation among themselves, they dispersed.

About noon that day, the British sloop-of-war "Grayton" made her appearance, and stood boldly into

the harbor where lay the "Providence." The United States colors were quickly hauled down from the fort flag-staff, and every means was taken to conceal the true state of affairs from the enemy. But the inhabitants along the waterside, by means of constant signalling and shouting, at last aroused the suspicion of her officers; and she hastily put about, and scudded for the open sea. The guns at Fort Nassau opened on her as she passed, and the aim of the Yankee gunners was accurate enough to make the splinters fly. The exact damage done her has, however, never been ascertained.

All that night the daring band of blue-jackets held the fort unmolested. But on the following morning the townspeople again plucked up courage, and to the number of five hundred marched to the fort, and placing several pieces of artillery in battery, summoned the garrison to surrender. The flag of truce that bore the summons carried also the threat that, unless the Americans laid down their arms without resistance, the fort would be stormed, and all therein put to the sword without mercy.

For answer to the summons, the Americans nailed their colors to the mast, and swore that while a man of them lived the fort should not be surrendered. By this bold defiance they so awed the enemy that the day passed without the expected assault; and at night the besiegers returned to their homes, without having fired a shot.

All that night the Americans worked busily, transferring to the "Providence" all the ammunition and stores in the fort; and the next morning the prizes were manned, the guns of the fort spiked, and the adventurous Yankees set sail in triumph. For three days they had held possession of the island, though outnumbered tenfold by the inhabitants; they had cap-

tured large quantities of ammunition and naval stores; they had freed their captured countrymen; they had retaken from the British five captured American vessels, and in the whole affair they had lost not a single man. It was an achievement of which a force of triple the number might have been proud.

But perhaps the greatest naval event of 1778 in American waters was the arrival of the fleet sent by France to co-operate with the American forces. Not that anything of importance was ever accomplished by this naval force: the French officers seemed to find their greatest satisfaction in manœuvring, reconnoitring, and performing in the most exact and admirable manner all the preliminaries to a battle. Having done this, they would sail away, never firing a gun. The Yankees were prone to disregard the nice points of naval tactics. Their plan was to lay their ships alongside the enemy, and pound away until one side or the other had to yield or sink. But the French allies were strong on tactics, and somewhat weak in dash; and, as a result, there is not one actual combat in which they figured to be recorded.

It was a noble fleet that France sent to the aid of the struggling Americans,—twelve ships-of-the-line and three frigates. What dashing Paul Jones would have done, had he ever enjoyed the command of such a fleet, almost passes imagination. Certain it is that he would have wasted little time in formal evolutions. But the fleet was commanded by Count d'Estaing, a French naval officer of honorable reputation. What he accomplished during his first year's cruise in American waters, can be told in a few words. His intention was to trap Lord Howe's fleet in the Delaware, but he arrived too late. He then followed the British to New York, but was baffled there by the fact that his vessels were too heavy to cross the bar. Thence he

went to Newport, where the appearance of his fleet frightened the British into burning four of their frigates, and sinking two sloops-of-war. Lord Howe, hearing of this, plucked up courage, and, gathering together all his ships, sailed from New York to Newport, to give battle to the French. The two fleets were about equally matched. On the 10th of August the enemies met in the open sea, off Newport. For two days they kept out of range of each other, manœuvring for the weather-gage; that is, the French fleet, being to windward of the British, strove to keep that position, while the British endeavored to take it from them. The third day a gale arose; and when it subsided the ships were so crippled, that, after exchanging a few harmless broadsides at long range, they withdrew, and the naval battle was ended.

Such was the record of d'Estaing's magnificent fleet during 1778. Certainly the Americans had little to learn from the representatives of the power that had for years contended with England for the mastery of the seas.

In observing the course of naval events in 1779, it is noticeable that the most effective work was done by the cruisers sent out by the individual States, or by privateers. The United States navy, proper, did little except what was done in European waters by Paul Jones. Indeed, along the American coast, a few cruises in which no actions of moment occurred, although several prizes were taken, make up the record of naval activity for the year.

The first of these cruises was that made in April by the ships "Warren," "Queen of France," and "Ranger." They sailed from Boston, and were out but a few days when they captured a British privateer of fourteen guns. From one of the sailors on this craft it was learned that a large fleet of transports

and storeships had just sailed from New York, bound for Georgia. Crowding on all sail, the Americans set out in pursuit, and off Cape Henry overhauled the chase. Two fleets were sighted, one to windward numbering nine sail, and one to leeward made up of ten sail. The pursuers chose the fleet to windward for their prey, and by sharp work succeeded in capturing seven vessels in eight hours. Two of the ships were armed cruisers of twenty-nine and sixteen guns respectively, and all the prizes were heavy laden with provisions, ammunition, and cavalry accoutrements. All were safely taken into port.

In June, another fleet of United States vessels left Boston in search of British game. For a time the cruisers fell in with nothing of importance. But one day about the middle of July, as the three vessels lay hove to off the banks of Newfoundland, in the region of perpetual fog, the dull booming of a signal gun was heard. Nothing was to be seen on any side. From the quarter-deck, and from the cross-trees alike, the eager eyes of the officers and seamen strove in vain to penetrate the dense curtain of gray fog that shut them in. But again the signal gun sounded, then another; and tone and direction alike told that the two reports had not come from the same cannon. Then a bell was heard telling the hour,—another, still another; then a whole chorus of bells. Clearly a large fleet was shut in the fog.

About eleven o'clock in the morning the fog lifted, and to their intense surprise the crew of the "Queen of France" found themselves close alongside of a large merchant-ship. As the fog cleared away more completely, ships appeared on every side; and the astonished Yankees found themselves in the midst of a fleet of about one hundred and fifty sail under convoy of a British ship-of-the-line, and several frigates and sloops-

of-war. Luckily the United States vessels had no colors flying, and nothing about them to betray their nationality: so Captain Rathburn of the "Queen" determined to try a little masquerading.

Bearing down upon the nearest merchantman, he hailed her; and the following conversation ensued:

"What fleet is this?"

"British merchantmen from Jamaica, bound for London. Who are you?"

"His Majesty's ship 'Arethusa,'" answered Rathburn boldly, "from Halifax on cruise. Have you seen any Yankee privateers?"

"Ay, ay, sir," was the response. "Several have been driven out of the fleet."

"Come aboard the 'Arethusa,' then. I wish to consult with you."

Soon a boat put off from the side of the merchantman, and a jolly British sea-captain confidently clambered to the deck of the "Queen." Great was his astonishment to be told that he was a prisoner, and to see his boat's crew brought aboard, and their places taken by American jackies. Back went the boat to the British ship; and soon the Americans were in control of the craft, without in the least alarming the other vessels, that lay almost within hail. The "Queen" then made up to another ship, and captured her in the same manner.

But at this juncture Commodore Whipple, in the "Providence," hailed the "Queen," and directed Rathburn to edge out of the fleet before the British men-of-war should discover his true character. Rathburn protested vigorously, pointing out the two vessels he had captured, and urging Whipple to follow his example, and capture as many vessels as he could in the same manner. Finally Whipple overcame his fears,

and adopted Rathburn's methods, with such success that shortly after nightfall the Americans left the fleet, taking with them eleven rich prizes. Eight of these they succeeded in taking safe to Boston, where they were sold for more than a million dollars.

The autumn and winter passed without any further exploits on the part of the navy. The number of the regular cruisers had been sadly diminished, and several were kept blockaded in home ports. Along the American coast the British cruisers fairly swarmed; and the only chance for the few Yankee ships afloat was to keep at sea as much as possible, and try to intercept the enemy's privateers, transports, and merchantmen, on their way across the ocean.

One United States frigate, and that one a favorite ship in the navy, was ordered abroad in February, 1781, and on her voyage did some brave work for her country. This vessel was the "Alliance," once under the treacherous command of the eccentric Landais, and since his dismissal commanded by Captain John Barry, of whose plucky fight in the "Raleigh" we have already spoken. The "Alliance" sailed from Boston, carrying an army officer on a mission to France. She made the voyage without sighting an enemy. Having landed her passenger, she set out from l'Orient, with the "Lafayette," forty, in company. The two cruised together for three days, capturing two heavy privateers. They then parted, and the "Alliance" continued her cruise alone.

On the 28th of May the lookout reported two sail in sight; and soon the strangers altered their course, and bore down directly upon the American frigate. It was late in the afternoon, and darkness set in before the strangers were near enough for their character to be made out. At dawn all eyes on the "Alliance" scanned the ocean in search of the two vessels, which

were then easily seen to be a sloop-of-war and a brig. Over each floated the British colors.

A dead calm rested upon the waters. Canvas was spread on all the ships, but flapped idly against the yards. Not the slightest motion could be discerned, and none of the ships had steerage-way. The enemy had evidently determined to fight; for before the sun rose red and glowing from beneath the horizon, sweeps were seen protruding from the sides of the two ships, and they gradually began to lessen the distance between them and the American frigate. Captain Barry had no desire to avoid the conflict; though in a calm, the lighter vessels, being manageable with sweeps, had greatly the advantage of the "Alliance," which could only lie like a log upon the water. Six hours of weary work with the sweeps passed before the enemy came near enough to hail. The usual questions and answers were followed by the roar of the cannon, and the action began. The prospects for the "Alliance" were dreary indeed; for the enemy took positions on the quarters of the helpless ship, and were able to pour in broadsides, while she could respond only with a few of her aftermost guns. But, though the case looked hopeless, the Americans fought on, hoping that a wind might spring up, that would give the good ship "Alliance" at least a fighting chance.

As Barry strode the quarter-deck, watching the progress of the fight, encouraging his men, and looking out anxiously for indications of a wind, a grape-shot struck him in the shoulder, and felled him to the deck. He was on his feet again in an instant; and though weakened by the pain, and the rapid flow of blood from the wound, he remained on deck. At last, however, he became too weak to stand, and was carried below. At this moment a flying shot carried away the American colors; and, as the fire of the "Alliance" was

stopped a moment for the loading of the guns, the enemy thought the victory won, and cheered lustily. But their triumph was of short duration; for a new ensign soon took the place of the vanished one, and the fire of the "Alliance" commenced again.

The "Alliance" was now getting into sore straits. The fire of the enemy had told heavily upon her, and her fire in return had done but little visible damage. As Captain Barry lay on his berth, enfeebled by the pain of his wound, and waiting for the surgeon's attention, a lieutenant entered.

"The ship remains unmanageable, sir," said he. "The rigging is badly cut up, and there is danger that the fore-top-mast may go by the board. The enemy's fire is telling on the hull, and the carpenter reports two leaks. Eight or ten of the people are killed, and several officers wounded. Have we your consent to striking the colors?"

"No, sir," roared out Barry, sitting bolt upright. "And, if this ship can't be fought without me, I will be carried on deck."

The lieutenant returned with his report; and, when the story became known to the crew, the jackies cheered for their dauntless commander.

"We'll stand by the old man, lads," said one of the petty officers.

"Ay, ay, that we will! We'll stick to him right manfully," was the hearty response.

But now affairs began to look more hopeful for the "Alliance." Far away a gentle rippling of the water rapidly approaching the ship gave promise of wind. The quick eye of an old boatswain caught sight of it. "A breeze, a breeze!" he cried; and the jackies took up the shout, and sprang to their stations at the ropes, ready to take advantage of the coming gust. Soon the breeze arrived, the idly flapping sails filled out, the

helmsman felt the responsive pressure of the water as he leaned upon the wheel, the gentle ripple of the water alongside gladdened the ears of the blue-jackets, the ship keeled over to leeward, then swung around responsive to her helm, and the first effective broadside went crashing into the side of the nearest British vessel. After that, the conflict was short. Though the enemy had nearly beaten the "Alliance" in the calm, they were no match for her when she was able to manœuvre. Their resistance was plucky; but when Captain Barry came on deck, with his wound dressed, he was just in time to see the flags of both vessels come fluttering to the deck.

The two prizes proved to be the "Atlanta" sixteen, and the "Trepassy," fourteen. Both were badly cut up, and together had suffered a loss of forty-one men in killed and wounded. On the "Alliance" were eleven dead, and twenty-one wounded.

Once more before the cessation of hostilities between Great Britain and the United States threw her out of commission did the "Alliance" exchange shots with a hostile man-of-war. It was in 1782, when the noble frigate was engaged in bringing specie from the West Indies. She had under convoy a vessel loaded with supplies, and the two had hardly left Havana when some of the enemy's ships caught sight of them, and gave chase. While the chase was in progress, a fifty-gun ship hove in sight, and was soon made out to be a French frigate. Feeling that he had an ally at hand, Barry now wore ship, and attacked the leading vessel, and a spirited action followed, until the enemy, finding himself hard pressed, signalled for his consorts, and Barry, seeing that the French ship made no sign of coming to his aid, drew off.

Irritated by the failure of the French frigate to come to his assistance, Barry bore down upon her and hailed.

The French captain declared that the manœuvres of the "Alliance" and her antagonist had made him suspect that the engagement was only a trick to draw him into the power of the British fleet. He had feared that the "Alliance" had been captured, and was being used as a decoy; but now that the matter was made clear to him, he would join the "Alliance" in pursuit of the enemy. This he did; but Barry soon found that the fifty was so slow a sailer, that the "Alliance" might catch up with the British fleet, and be knocked to pieces by their guns, before the Frenchman could get within range. Accordingly he abandoned the chase in disgust, and renewed his homeward course. Some years later, an American gentleman travelling in Europe met the British naval officer who commanded the frigate which Barry had engaged. This officer, then a vice-admiral, declared that he had never before seen a ship so ably fought as was the "Alliance," and acknowledged that the presence of his consorts alone saved him a drubbing.

This engagement was the last fought by the "Alliance" during the Revolution, and with it we practically complete our narrative of the work of the regular navy during that war. One slight disaster to the American cause alone remains to be mentioned. The "Confederacy," a thirty-two-gun frigate built in 1778, was captured by the enemy in 1781. She was an unlucky ship, having been totally dismasted on her first cruise, and captured by an overwhelming force on her second.

Though this chapter completes the story of the regular navy during the Revolution, there remain many important naval events to be described in an ensuing chapter. The work of the ships fitted out by Congress was aided greatly by the armed cruisers furnished by individual States, and privateers. Some of the

exploits of these crafts and some desultory maritime hostilities we shall describe in the next chapter. And if the story of the United States navy, as told in these few chapters, seems a record of events trivial as compared with the gigantic naval struggles of 1812 and 1861, it must be remembered that not only were naval architecture and ordnance in their infancy in 1776, but that the country was young, and its sailors unused to the ways of war. But that country, young as it was, produced Paul Jones; and it is to be questioned whether any naval war since has brought forth a braver or nobler naval officer, or one more skilled in the handling of a single ship-of-war.

CHAPTER VI

Work of the Privateers—The "General Hancock" and the "Levant"—Exploit of the "Pickering"—Raiding Nova Scotia—"Congress" and "Savage"—"Hyder Ali" and "General Monk."

To chronicle in full the myriad exploits and experiences of the privateers and armed cruisers in the service of individual States during the Revolution, would require a volume thrice the size of this. Moreover, it is difficult and well-nigh impossible to obtain authentic information regarding the movements of this class of armed craft. An immense number of anecdotes of their prowess is current, and some few such narratives will be repeated in this chapter; but, as a rule, they are based only upon tradition, or the imperfect and often incorrect reports in the newspapers of the day.

The loss inflicted upon Great Britain by the activity of American privateers was colossal. For the first year of the war the Continental Congress was unwilling to take so belligerent a step as to encourage privateering; but, in the summer of 1776, the issuing of letters of marque and reprisal was begun, and in a short time all New England had gone to privateering. The ocean fairly swarmed with trim Yankee schooners and brigs, and in the two years that followed nearly eight hundred merchantmen were taken.

Discipline on the privateers was lax, and the profits of a successful cruise were enormous. Often a new, speedy craft paid her whole cost of construction on her first cruise. The sailors fairly revelled in money at the close of such a cruise; and, like true jack-tars, they made their money fly as soon as they got ashore. A few days would generally suffice to squander all the

earnings of a two-months' cruise; and, penniless but happy, Jack would ship for another bout with fortune.

A volume could be written dealing with the exploits of the privateers, but for our purpose a few instances of their dash and spirit will be enough. Though the purpose of the privateers was purely mercenary, their chief end and aim being to capture defenceless merchantmen, yet they were always ready to fight when fighting was necessary, and more than once made a good showing against stronger and better disciplined naval forces. In many cases audacity and dash more than made up for the lack of strength.

In 1777 two American privateers hung about the British Isles, making captures, and sending their prizes into French ports. The exploits of Paul Jones were equalled by these irregular cruisers. One of them, being in need of provisions, put into the little Irish port of Beerhaven, and lay at anchor for ten hours, while her crew scoured the town in search of the needed stores. A second privateer boldly entered a harbor on the Island of Guernsey. A castle at the entrance of the harbor opened fire upon her, whereupon she came about, and, keeping out of range of the castle guns, captured a large brig that was making for the port. When night fell, the privateer sent a boat's crew ashore, and took captive two officers of the local militia.

In 1778 occurred an action between a private armed ship and a British frigate, in which the privateer was signally successful. On the 19th of September of that year, the "General Hancock," a stout-built, well-armed and manned privateer, fell in with the "Levant," a British frigate of thirty-two guns. The "Hancock" made no attempt to avoid a conflict, and opened with a broadside without answering the enemy's hail. The action was stubbornly contested upon both sides. After

an hour of fighting, the captain of the Yankee ship, peering through the smoke, saw that the colors no longer waved above his adversary.

"Have you struck?" he shouted.

"No. Fire away," came the response faintly through the roar of the cannon. Two hours longer the combat raged, with the ships lying yard-arm to yard-arm. A ball struck Captain Hardy of the "Hancock" in the neck, and he was carried below, while the first lieutenant took command of the ship. A few minutes later there arose a deafening roar and blinding flash; a terrific shock threw the men on the American ship to the deck. Stifling smoke darkened the atmosphere; and pieces of timber, cordage, and even horribly torn bits of human flesh began to fall upon the decks. When the smoke cleared away, the Americans looked eagerly for their enemy. Where she had floated a minute or two before, was now a shattered, blackened hulk fast sinking beneath the waves. The surface of the sea for yards around was strewn with wreckage, and here and there men could be seen struggling for life. As ready to save life as they had been to destroy it, the Americans lowered their boats and pulled about, picking up the survivors of the explosion. The boatswain of the ill-fated ship and seventeen of the crew were thus saved, but more than fourscore brave fellows went down with her. The American vessel herself was damaged not a little by the violence of the explosion.

This was not the only case during this year in which a British man-of-war met defeat at the guns of a Yankee privateer. The "Hinchinbrooke," sloop-of-war fourteen; the "York," tender twelve; and the "Enterprise," ten guns,—all struck their colors to private armed vessels flying the Stars and Stripes.

By 1778 the privateers under the British flag were

afloat in no small number. America had no commerce on which they might prey, and they looked forward only to recapturing those British vessels that had been taken by Yankee privateers and sent homeward. That so many British vessels should have found profitable employment in this pursuit is in itself a speaking tribute to the activity of the American private armed navy.

During the Revolution, as during the second war with Great Britain in 1812, Salem, Mass., and Baltimore, Md., were the principal points from which privateers hailed. In all the early wars of the United States, the term "Salem privateer" carried with it a picture of a fleet schooner, manned with a picked crew of able seamen, commanded by a lanky Yankee skipper who knew the byways of old ocean as well as the highways of trade, armed with eight, four, or six pounders, and a heavy "Long Tom" amidships. Scores of such craft sailed from Salem during the Revolution; and hardly a week passed without two or three returning privateers entering the little port and discharging their crews to keep the little village in a turmoil until their prize money was spent, or, to use the sailors' phrase, until "no shot was left in the locker."

One of the most successful of the Salem privateers was the "Pickering," a craft carrying a battery of sixteen guns, and a crew of forty-seven men. On one cruise she fought an engagement of an hour and a half with a British cutter of twenty guns; and so roughly did she handle the enemy, that he was glad to sheer off. A day or two later, the "Pickering" overhauled the "Golden Eagle," a large schooner of twenty-two guns and fifty-seven men. The action which followed was ended by the schooner striking her flag. A prize crew was then put aboard the "Golden Eagle," and she was ordered to follow in the wake of her captor. Three days later the British sloop-of-war "Achilles"

hove in sight, and gave chase to the privateer and her prize. After a fifteen hours' chase the prize was overhauled; and the sloop-of-war, after taking possession of her, continued in pursuit of the privateer. But while the privateersmen had preferred flight to fighting while nothing was at stake, they did not propose to let their prize be taken from them without a resistance, however great the odds against them. Accordingly they permitted the "Achilles" to overhaul them, and a sharp action followed. The British tried to force the combat by boarding; but the Americans, with pikes and cutlasses, drove them back to their own ship. Then the two vessels separated, and during the rest of the conflict came no nearer each other than the length of a pistol-shot. At this distance they carried on a spirited cannonade for upwards of three hours, when the "Achilles," concluding that she had had enough, sheered off. Thereupon, the "Pickering" coolly ran back to her late prize, took possession of her, captured the lieutenant and prize crew that the "Achilles" had put in charge of her, and continued her cruise.

A good example of the Baltimore privateers was the "Revenge," mounting eighteen guns, with a crew of fifty men. In 1780 this vessel was commanded by Captain Alexander Murray of the regular navy. She was engaged by a large number of Baltimore merchants to convoy a fleet of merchantmen, but had hardly started to sea with her charges when she fell in with a fleet of British vessels, and was forced to retreat up the Patuxent River. While there, the American fleet was strengthened by several privateers and armed merchant-vessels which joined it, so that it was felt safe to try again to get to sea. Accordingly the attempt was made; but, though the captains of the fleet had signed a solemn compact to stand together in case of danger, the sudden appearance of a fleet of hostile

armed vessels sent all scurrying up the Patuxent again, except one brig and a schooner. The British fleet consisted of a ship of eighteen guns, a brig of sixteen, and three privateer schooners. Leaving the schooners to his two faithful consorts, Murray threw himself between the two larger vessels and the flying merchantmen. Seeing themselves thus balked of their prey, the enemy turned fiercely upon the "Revenge," but were met with so spirited a resistance, that they hauled off after an hour's fighting. The other American vessels behaved equally well, and the discomfiture of the British was complete.

Philadelphia, though not looked upon as a centre of privateering activity, furnished one privateer that made a notable record. This was the "Holkar," sixteen guns. In April, 1780, she captured a British schooner of ten guns; and in May of the same year she fought a desperate action with a British privateer brig, the name of which has never been ascertained. Twice the Briton sheered off to escape the telling fire of the American; but the "Holkar" pressed him closely, and only the appearance of a second British armed vessel at the scene of the action saved the Englishman from capture. This battle was one of the most sanguinary ever fought by private armed vessels; for of the crew of the "Holkar" six were killed and sixteen wounded, including the captain and first lieutenant, while of the enemy there were about the same number killed and twenty wounded. Three months later this same privateer fell in with the British sixteen-gun cutter "Hypocrite," and captured her after a sharp conflict.

Perhaps the most audacious privateering exploit was that of the privateers "Hero," "Hope," and "Swallow," in July, 1782. The captains of these craft, meeting after an unprofitable season upon the high seas, conceived the idea of making a descent upon the Nova

Scotian town of Lunenburg, some thirty-five miles from Halifax. Little time was wasted in discussion. Privateers are not hampered by official red tape. So it happened that early in the month the three privateers appeared off the harbor of the threatened town, having landed a shore party of ninety men. Before the invaders the inhabitants retreated rapidly, making some slight resistance. Two block-houses, garrisoned by British regulars, guarded the town. One of these fortresses the Americans burned, whereupon the British established themselves in the second, and prepared to stand a siege. Luckily for the Americans, the block-house was within range of the harbor; so that the three privateers took advantageous positions, and fired a few rounds of solid shot into the enemy's wooden citadel. The besieged then made haste to raise the white flag, and surrendered themselves prisoners-of-war. When the Yankee ships left the harbor, they took with them a large quantity of merchandise and provisions, and a thousand pounds sterling by way of ransom.

One more conflict, in which the irregular naval forces of the United States did credit to themselves, must be described before dismissing the subject of privateering. In September, 1781, the British sloop-of-war "Savage" was cruising off the southern coast of the United States. Her officers and men were in a particularly good humor, and felt a lively sense of self-satisfaction; for they had just ascended the Potomac, and plundered General Washington's estate,—an exploit which would make them heroes in the eyes of their admiring countrymen.

Off Charleston the "Savage" encountered the American privateer "Congress," of about the same strength as herself,—twenty guns and one hundred and fifty men. In one respect the "Congress" was the weaker; for her crew was composed largely of landsmen, and

her marines were a company of militia, most of whom were sadly afflicted with seasickness. Nevertheless, the Yankee craft rushed boldly into action, opening fire with her bow-chasers as soon as she came within range. Like two savage bulldogs, the two ships rushed at each other, disdaining all manœuvring, and seemingly intent only upon locking in a deadly struggle, yard-arm to yard-arm. At first the "Savage" won a slight advantage. Swinging across the bow of the "Congress," she raked her enemy twice. But soon the two ships lay side by side, and the thunder of the cannon was constant. The militia-marines on the "Congress" did good service. Stationed in the tops, on the fore-castle, the quarter-deck, and every elevated place on the ship, they poured down upon the deck of the enemy a murderous fire. The jackies at the great guns poured in broadsides so well directed that soon the "Savage" had not a rope left with which to manage the sails. Her quarter-deck was cleared, and not a man was to be seen to serve as a mark for the American gunners. So near lay the two vessels to each other, that the fire from the guns scorched the gunners on the opposite ship. The antagonists were inextricably entangled; for the mizzen-mast of the "Savage" had been shot away, and had fallen into the after-rigging of the "Congress." There was no flight for the weaker vessel. When she could no longer fight, surrender was her only recourse. Neither vessel showed any colors, for both ensigns had been shot away early in the action. Accordingly, when the boatswain of the "Savage" was seen upon the fore-castle wildly waving his arms, it was taken as an evidence of surrender; and the fire slackened until his voice could be heard.

"Give us quarter," he cried hoarsely; "we are a wreck, and strike our flag."

The firing then ceased; but, when the lieutenant of

the "Congress" ordered a boat lowered in which to board the prize, the old boatswain came back with the report:

"Boats all knocked to pieces, sir. Couldn't find one that would float."

Accordingly the two vessels had to be slowly drawn together, and the boarding party reached the deck of the prize by clambering over a spar which served as a bridge. When they reached the prize, they found her decks covered with dead and wounded men. The slaughter had been terrible. Twenty-three men were killed, and thirty-one wounded. On the "Congress" were thirty, killed and wounded together. One of the wounded Americans was found lying with his back braced against the foot of the bowsprit, cheering for the victory, and crying:

"If they have broken my legs, my hands and heart are still whole."

Throughout this sanguinary action both parties showed the greatest courage and determination. Two vessels of the two most perfectly organized regular navies in the world could not have been better handled, nor could they have more stubbornly contested for the victory.

A class of armed vessels outside the limits of the regular navy, but very active and efficient in the service of the country, was the maritime forces of the individual States. Before Congress had seen the necessity for a naval force, several of the colonies had been alive to the situation, and fitted out cruisers of their own. Even after the Revolution had developed into a war of the first magnitude, and after the colonies had assumed the title of States, and delegated to Congress the duty of providing for the common defence, they still continued to fit out their own men-of-war to protect their ports and act as convoys for their merchant fleets. Though

vessels in this service seldom cruised far from the coast of their home colony, yet occasionally they met the vessels of the enemy, and many sharp actions were fought by them.

Of all the actions fought by the State cruisers, the most hotly contested was that between the Pennsylvania cruiser "Hyder Ali," and the British sloop-of-war "General Monk." The "Hyder Ali" was a merchantman, bought by the State just as she was about departing on a voyage to the West Indies. She was in no way calculated for a man-of-war; but the need was pressing, and she was pierced for eight ports on a side, and provided with a battery of six-pounders. The command of this vessel was given to Joshua Barney, a young officer with an extensive experience of Yankee privateers and British prisons.

Barney's instructions were, not to go to sea, but to patrol the Delaware River and Bay, and see that no privateer lay in wait for the merchant-vessels that cleared from the port of Philadelphia. In April, 1782, the "Hyder Ali" stood down Delaware Bay at the head of a large fleet of outward-bound merchantmen. When Cape May was reached, strong head-winds sprang up, and the whole fleet anchored to await more favorable weather before putting out to sea. While they lay at anchor, the "Hyder Ali" sighted a trio of British vessels, two ships and a brig, rounding the cape. Instantly Barney signalled his convoy to trip anchor and retreat, a signal which was promptly obeyed by all save one too daring craft, that tried to slip round the cape, and get to sea, but fell into the hands of the enemy. Soon the whole fleet, with the "Hyder Ali" bringing up the rear, fled up the bay. The British followed in hot pursuit.

At a point half-way up the bay the pursuers parted; one of the ships, a frigate, cutting through a side chan-

nel in the hope of intercepting the fugitives. The other two pursuers, a privateer brig and a sloop-of-war, continued in the wake of the "Hyder Ali." The brig proved herself a clipper, and soon came up with the American vessel, which promptly offered battle. The challenge was declined by the privateer, which fired a harmless broadside, and continued on up the bay. Barney let her pass, for he had determined to risk the dangers of an unequal combat with the sloop-of-war. This vessel came up rapidly; and as she drew near Barney luffed up suddenly, and let fly a broadside. This somewhat staggered the enemy, who had expected only a tame surrender; but she quickly recovered, and came boldly on. At this juncture Barney turned to his helmsman, and said:

"Now, when I give the word, pay no attention to my order, but put the helm hard-a-starboard. Pay no heed to the actual command I may give you."

The British vessel was then within half pistol-shot, and her forward guns were beginning to bear. From his station on the quarter-deck Barney shouted to his steersman in stentorian tones:

"Port your helm. Hard-a-port."

The order was clearly heard on board the enemy, and he prepared to manœuvre his ship accordingly. But the steersman of the "Hyder Ali" remembered his instructions; and before the enemy discovered the ruse, the American ship lay athwart the other's bow, and the bowsprit of the enemy was caught in the "Hyder Ali's" rigging, giving the latter a raking position. Quickly the Yankee gunners seized the opportunity. Not five miles away was a British frigate ready to rush to the assistance of her consort, and whatever was to be done by the bold lads of Pennsylvania had to be done with expedition. No cheer rose from their ranks; but with grim determination they worked at

the great guns, pouring in rapid and effective broadsides. The explosions of the two batteries were like the deafening peals of thunder echoed and re-echoed in some mountain-gorge. Smoke hid the vessels from sight, and the riflemen in the tops could only occasionally catch sight of the figures of the enemy. The enemy had twenty guns to Barney's sixteen; but he was outmanœuvred at the start, and this disadvantage he never overcame. Half an hour from the time of the opening of the battle, his flag was struck, and the Americans, with lusty cheers, took possession of their prize. There was no time for ceremony. The frigate had seen the conflict from afar, and was bearing down upon the two antagonists. So without even asking the name of the captured vessel, Barney hastily threw a prize crew aboard, ordered her to proceed to Philadelphia, and himself remained behind to cover the retreat.

Some hours later, having escaped the British frigate, the two vessels sailed up to a Philadelphia wharf. The scars of battle had been in no way healed: the tattered sails, the shattered hulls and bulwarks, the cordage hanging loosely from the masts, told the story of battle. The crowd that rushed to the wharf, and peered curiously about the decks of the two vessels, saw a ghastly and horrible sight. For the battle had been as sanguinary as it was spirited, and the dead still lay where they fell. On the British vessel, the "General Monk," lay the lifeless bodies of twenty men; while twenty-six wounded, whose blood stained the deck, lay groaning in the cockpit below. On the "Hyder Ali" were four killed and eleven wounded.

This action, for steadiness and brilliancy, was not surpassed by any naval duel of the war of the Revolution. By it the name of Joshua Barney was put upon a plane with those of the most eminent commanders in the regular navy; and had not the war speedily ter-

minated, he would have been granted a commission and a ship by the United States.

While the chief naval events of the war for independence have now been recounted, there still remain certain incidents connected more or less closely with the war on the water, which deserve a passing mention. One of these is the curious desultory warfare carried on in and about New York Harbor by fishermen and longshoremen in whale-boats, dories, sharpies, and similar small craft.

From 1776 until the close of the war, New York City and the region bordering upon the harbor were occupied by the British. Provisions were needed for their support, and were brought from Connecticut and New Jersey in small sailing craft, chiefly whale-boats. These boats the patriots often intercepted, and desperate encounters upon the water were frequent. Nor did the Yankee boatmen confine their attacks to the provision boats alone. In the summer of 1775 the British transport "Blue Mountain Valley" was captured by a band of hardy Jerseymen, who concealed themselves in the holds of four small sail-boats until fairly alongside the enemy's vessel, when they swarmed out and drove the British from the dock of their vessel.

No narrative of the events of the Revolution would be complete without some description of the floating prison-houses in which the British immured the hapless soldiers and sailors who fell into their hands. Of these the chief one was a dismasted hulk known as the "Old Jersey" prison-ship, and moored in Wallabout Bay near New York City. No pen can adequately describe the horrors of this prison; but some extracts from the published recollections of men once imprisoned in her noisome hold will give some idea of the miserable fate of those condemned to be imprisoned on her.

Thomas Andros, a sailor taken by the British with

the privateer "Fair American," writes of the "Old Jersey":

This was an old sixty-four-gun ship, which, through age, had become unfit for further actual service. She was stripped of every spar and all her rigging. After a battle with a French fleet, her lion figure-head was taken away to repair another ship. No appearance of ornament was left, and nothing remained but an old unsightly rotten hulk; and doubtless no other ship in the British navy ever proved the means of the destruction of so many human beings. It is computed that no less than eleven thousand American seamen perished in her. When I first became an inmate of this abode of suffering, despair, and death, there were about four hundred prisoners on board; but in a short time they amounted to twelve hundred. In a short time we had two hundred or more sick and dying lodged in the forepart of the lower gun-deck, where all the prisoners were confined at night. Utter derangement was a common symptom of yellow-fever; and to increase the horror of the darkness that surrounded us (for we were allowed no light between decks), the voice of warning would be heard, "Take heed to yourselves. There is a madman stalking through the ship with a knife in his hand." I sometimes found the man a corpse in the morning, by whose side I laid myself down at night. In the morning the hatchways were thrown open; and we were allowed to ascend to the upper deck all at once, and remain on the upper deck all day. But the first object that met our view in the morning was an appalling spectacle,—a boat loaded with dead bodies, conveying them to the Long Island shore, where they were very slightly covered.

Ebenezer Fox, another privateersman, has left his recollections of this dreadful prison. His description of the food upon which the unhappy prisoners were forced to subsist is interesting:

Our bill of fare was as follows: on Sunday, one pound of biscuit, one pound of pork, and half a pint of pease; Monday, one pound of biscuit, one pint of oatmeal, and two ounces of butter; Tuesday, one pound of biscuit, and two pounds of salt beef; Wednesday, one and a half pounds of flour, and two ounces of suet; Thursday was a repetition of Sunday's fare; Friday, of Monday's; and Saturday, of Tuesday's.

If this food had been of good quality and properly cooked, as we had no labor to perform, it would have kept us comfortable, at least from suffering; but this was not the case. All our food

appeared to be damaged. As for the pork, we were cheated out of it more than half the time; and when it was obtained, one would have judged from its motley hues, exhibiting the consistence and appearance of variegated fancy soap, that it was the flesh of the porpoise or sea-hog, and had been an inhabitant of the ocean rather than of the sty. The pease were generally damaged, and, from the imperfect manner in which they were cooked, were about as indigestible as grape-shot. The butter the reader will not suppose was the real "Goshen;" and had it not been for its adhesive properties to hold together the particles of the biscuit, that had been so riddled by the worms as to lose all their attraction of cohesion, we should have considered it no desirable addition to our viands.

With this chapter ends the narrative of the naval events of the war of the Revolution. It was not a great naval war, for the belligerent nations were not sufficiently well matched in naval strength. But it brought forth Paul Jones and more than one other brave and able commander. It established a new flag upon the seas, a flag that has ever since held an honorable position among the insignia of the foremost nations of the earth. And in the war of the Revolution, as in every war in which the United States has taken part since, there was manifested the wonderful ability of the American people to rush into a conflict half-prepared, and gain daily in strength until the cause for which they fight is won. In 1776 that cause was liberty, and in its behalf none fought more bravely than the lads who wore the blue jackets of the American navy.

CHAPTER VII

The Barbary Corsairs—America Finally Resists Piracy—Bainbridge and the "Philadelphia"—Decatur's Daring Exploit—An Attack on the Tripolitan Gunboats—The Fireship at Tripoli.

IT is a curious fact that after every war, except the recent one with Spain, the navy of the United States has been allowed to languish almost to the point of extinction. Particularly was this true when the Revolution ended. For years thereafter the victorious colonies were loosely bound together in the futile Confederation which was without power to build or even maintain a navy. When the Constitution was adopted, and the United States of America came into being, George Washington in his first message urged the creation of a navy, but Congress permitted the recommendation to go unheeded. The nation was at peace with the world, and that maxim, now hackneyed, "In time of peace prepare for war," was then little observed.

Yet there was reason enough for a fleet. Even under the Confederacy American merchant-vessels were multiplying on the seas, flying the Stars and Stripes, which gave them no protection whatsoever. Along the Mediterranean shore of Africa were ranged the piratical Barbary powers—Tripoli, Algiers, Tunis, Morocco—supported mainly by preying upon the peaceful commerce of other nations. In 1785 several American vessels were captured and their people sold into slavery. Had this condition persisted until the organization of the Union, President Washington's recommendations might have been heeded, but about that time war broke out between Portugal and Algiers. The former blockaded the Straits of Gibraltar, so that the corsairs could

not escape, and for the time the commerce of the world was secure.

But in 1793 peace was declared between the warring powers and the corsairs swarmed forth again. American ships fell fast into their clutches. Two hundred American seamen were made slaves. Congress awoke. The frames of two frigates were laid down. And then—a treaty between the United States and the Dey of Algiers. And such a treaty! It agreed to pay annual tribute for the right to navigate the high seas. Under it in all more than a million dollars was paid—enough in those days to build at least three war-vessels. Moreover, when once the tribute fell into arrears, the obsequious government presented the royal corsair with a fully equipped frigate to allay his wrath.

Out of this tribute sprung some picturesque and mortifying incidents. Here is one:

In May, 1800, it fell to the lot of Captain William Bainbridge, commanding the frigate "George Washington," to carry the annual tribute to Algiers. On arriving there he was treated with contempt by the Dey, who demanded that he put the "Washington" at the service of Algiers, to carry her ambassador to Constantinople. "You pay me tribute, by which you become my slaves," said the Dey; "I have therefore a right to order you as I may think proper." Bainbridge protested, but to no avail. He had anchored his frigate under the guns of the Dey's castle, and to disobey meant capture and slavery. Accordingly he complied, but dispatched a letter to the authorities at home saying: "I hope I may never again be sent to Algiers with tribute, unless I am authorized to deliver it from the mouth of our cannon."

Of course the other states of the Barbary Coast hungered for their share of the spoils. But in 1801 the patience of the United States was exhausted, and

a small fleet was dispatched to the Mediterranean to awe the pirates. Even then the orders were to avoid battle and to take no prizes. But this order was overruled in letter if not in spirit by Captain Sterrett of the little schooner "Enterprise," who, being fired upon by a Tripolitan ship, responded fiercely and forced her to strike. He could not take her as a prize, so dismantled her, threw cannon, small arms, and cutlasses into the sea, and sent her home with this message:

Go tell the Bashaw of Tripoli, and the people of your country that in future they may expect only a tribute of powder and ball from the sailors of the United States.

This was the one action in which any of the vessels of the first United States fleet sent to the Barbary Coast engaged. The lesson was not sufficient. American white slaves were still bought and sold in the markets of Tripoli and Algiers, and an historian writing in 1795 applauds the United States government for its humanity in providing each of these with a suit of clothes yearly. But the leaven of national pride, the sense of national honor in the young Union was gradually working, and in 1802 a true expedition of war was sent to the Mediterranean. The vessels were the "Chesapeake," thirty-eight; "Constellation," thirty-eight; "New York," thirty-six; "John Adams," twenty-eight; "Adams," twenty-eight; and "Enterprise," twelve. All were under command of Commodore Morris, who was later recalled and Commodore Preble commissioned in his place. Five more vessels accompanied him.

For the first year the service of this fleet was moral rather than militant. There were merchant prizes taken, blockades maintained, and a daring descent made upon the shipping in the port of Tripoli by Lieutenant David D. Porter, first of a famous naval family. But



BOMBARDMENT OF ISLAND NO. 10
(From a print of the time)

for the two great events of the war with the Barbary powers we must look to the ensuing year.

It was in October that the "Philadelphia," a ship of thirty-eight guns, under command of Captain Bainbridge, was blockading the harbor of Tripoli, and in chasing a merchantman ran aground directly under the guns at the fortress.

The Americans were then in a most dangerous predicament. The sound of the firing had drawn a swarm of gunboats out of the harbor of Tripoli, and they were fast bearing down upon the helpless frigate. Every possible expedient was tried for the release of the ship, but to no avail. At last the gunboats, discovering her helpless condition, crowded so thick about her that there was no course open but to strike. And so, after flooding the magazine, throwing overboard all the small arms, and knocking holes in the bottom of the ship, Bainbridge reluctantly surrendered.

Hardly had the flag touched the deck, when the gunboats were alongside. If the Americans expected civilized treatment, they were sadly mistaken, for an undisciplined rabble came swarming over the taffrail. Lockers and chests were broken open, store-rooms ransacked, officers and men stripped of all the articles of finery they were wearing. It was a scene of unbridled pillage, in which the Tripolitan officers were as active as their men. An officer being held fast in the grasp of two of the Tripolitans, a third would ransack his pockets, and strip him of any property they might covet. Swords, watches, jewels, and money were promptly confiscated by the captors; and they even ripped the epaulets from the shoulders of the officers' uniforms. No resistance was made, until one of the pilferers tried to tear from Bainbridge an ivory miniature of his young and beautiful wife. Wrestling himself free, the captain knocked down the vandal, and

made so determined a resistance that his despoilers allowed him to keep the picture.

When all the portable property was in the hands of the victors, the Americans were loaded into boats, and taken ashore. It was then late at night; but the captives were marched through the streets to the palace of the Bashaw, and exhibited to that functionary. After expressing great satisfaction at the capture, the Bashaw ordered the sailors thrown into prison, while the officers remained that night as his guests. He entertained them with an excellent supper, but the next morning they were shown to the gloomy prison apartments that were destined to be their home until the end of the war.

A month later news of this disaster reached Preble. At once the Commodore, with his flagship "Constitution" and the little "Enterprise," proceeded to take up the blockade of Tripoli.

The vessels of the blockading squadron, from their station outside the bar, could see the captured "Philadelphia" riding lightly at her moorings under the guns of the Tripolitan batteries. Her captors had carefully repaired the injuries the Americans had inflicted upon the vessel before surrendering. Her foremast was again in place, the holes in her bottom were plugged, the scars of battle were effaced, and she rode at anchor as pretty a frigate as ever delighted the eye of a tar.

From his captivity Bainbridge had written letters to Commodore Preble, with postscripts written in lemon-juice, and illegible save when the sheet of paper was exposed to the heat. In these postscripts he urged the destruction of the "Philadelphia."

The suggestion appealed to Preble, and after consultation with Lieutenant Stephen Decatur this plan was evolved. On the way to the blockading station

a ketch had been captured laden with female slaves—a gift from the Bashaw to the Sultan. The slaves were set free, but the ketch was held as a prize. The plan now was to convert the captured ketch into a man-of-war, man her with volunteers, and with her attempt the perilous adventure of the destruction of the “Philadelphia.”

The project once broached was quickly carried into effect. The ketch was taken into the service, and named the “Intrepid.” News of the expedition spread throughout the squadron, and many officers eagerly volunteered their services. When the time was near at hand, Decatur called the crew of the “Enterprise” together, told them of the plan of the proposed expedition, pointed out its dangers, and called for volunteers. Every man and boy on the vessel stepped forward and begged to be taken. Decatur chose sixty-two picked men, and was about to leave the deck, when his steps were arrested by a young boy who begged hard to be taken.

“Why do you want to go, Jack?” asked the commodore.

“Well, sir,” said Jack, “you see, I’d kinder like to see the country.”

The oddity of the boy’s reason struck Decatur’s fancy, and he told Jack to report with the rest.

On the way, Decatur gave his forces careful instructions as to the method of attack. The Americans were divided into several boarding parties, each with its own officer and work. One party was to keep possession of the upper deck, another was to carry the gun-deck, a third should drive the enemy from the steerage, and so on. All were to carry pistols in their belts; but the fighting, as far as possible, was to be done with cutlasses, so that no noise might alarm the enemy in the batteries, and the vessels in the port.

One party was to hover near the "Philadelphia" in a light boat, and kill all Tripolitans who might try to escape to the shore by swimming. The watchword for the night was "Philadelphia."

About noon, the "Intrepid" came in sight of the towers of Tripoli. Both the ketch and the "Siren" had been so disguised that the enemy could not recognize them, and they therefore stood boldly for the harbor. As the wind was fresh, Decatur saw that he was likely to make port before night; and he therefore dragged a cable and a number of buckets astern to lessen his speed, fearing to take in sail, lest the suspicions of the enemy should be aroused.

When within about five miles of the town, the "Philadelphia" became visible. She floated lightly at her anchorage under the guns of two heavy batteries. Behind her lay moored two Tripolitan cruisers, and near by was a fleet of gunboats. It was a powerful stronghold into which the Yankee blue-jackets were about to carry the torch.

On the decks of the "Intrepid" but twelve men were visible. The rest lay flat on the deck, in the shadow of the bulwarks or weather-boards. Her course was laid straight for the bow of the frigate, which she was to foul. When within a short distance, a hail came from the "Philadelphia." In response, the pilot of the ketch answered, that the ketch was a coaster from Malta, that she had lost her anchors in the late gale, and had been nearly wrecked, and that she now asked permission to ride by the frigate during the night. The people on the frigate were wholly deceived, and sent out ropes to the ketch, allowing one of the boats of the "Intrepid" to make a line fast to the frigate. The ends of the ropes on the ketch were passed to the hidden men, who pulled lustily upon them, thus bringing the little craft alongside the frigate.

But, as she came into clearer view, the suspicions of the Tripolitans were aroused; and when at last the anchors of the "Intrepid" were seen hanging in their places at the cat-heads, the Tripolitans cried out that they had been deceived, and warned the strangers to keep off. At the same moment the cry, "Americanos! Americanos!" rang through the ship, and the alarm was given.

By this time the ketch was fast to the frigate. "Follow me, lads," cried Decatur, and sprang for the chain-plates of the "Philadelphia." Clinging there, he renewed his order to board; and the men sprang to their feet, and were soon clambering on board the frigate. Lieutenant Morris first trod the deck of the "Philadelphia," Decatur followed close after, and then the stream of men over the rail and through the open ports was constant. Complete as was the surprise, the entire absence of any resistance was astonishing. Few of the Turks had weapons in their hands, and those who had fled before the advancing Americans. On all sides the splashing of water told that the affrighted Turks were trying to make their escape that way. In ten minutes Decatur and his men had complete possession of the ship.

The combustibles were brought from the ketch, and piled about the frigate, and lighted. So quickly was the work done, and so rapidly did the flames spread, that the people who lit the fires in the store-rooms and cockpit had scarce time to get on deck before their retreat was cut off by the flames. Before the ketch could be cast off from the sides of the frigate, the flames came pouring out of the portholes, and flaming sparks fell aboard the smaller vessel, so that the ammunition which lay piled amidships was in grave danger of being exploded. Axes and cutlasses were swung with a will; and soon the bonds which held the two

vessels together were cut, and the ketch was pushed off. Then the blue-jackets bent to their sweeps, and soon the "Intrepid" was under good headway.

"Now, lads," cried Decatur, "give them three cheers."

And the jackies responded with ringing cheers, that mingled with the roar of the flames that now had the frame of the "Philadelphia" in their control. Then they grasped their sweeps again, and the little vessel glided away through a hail of grape and round shot from the Tripolitan batteries and men-of-war. Though the whistle of the missiles was incessant, and the splash of round-shot striking the water could be heard on every side, no one in the boat was hurt; and the only shot that touched the ketch went harmlessly through her mainsail. As they pulled away, they saw the flames catch the rigging of the "Philadelphia," and run high up the masts. Then the hatchways were burst open, and great gusts of flame leaped out. The shotted guns of the frigate were discharged in quick succession; one battery sending its iron messengers into the streets of Tripoli, while the guns on the other side bore upon Fort English. The angry glare of the flames, and the flash of the cannon, lighted up the bay; while the thunders of the cannonade and the cries of the Tripolitans told of the storm that was raging.

Not a man had been lost in the whole affair. As the expedition had been perfect in conception, so it was perfect in execution. The adventure became the talk of all Europe. Lord Nelson, England's greatest admiral, said of it: "It was the most bold and daring act of the ages." And when the news reached the United States, Decatur, despite his youth, was made a captain.

The great name of the war with Tripoli is that of Stephen Decatur. The story of the events with which



By courtesy of Hon. Theo. Sutro

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BURNING OF THE FRIGATE "PHILADELPHIA"

(In the Harbor of Tripoli, February 16, 1804)

he was identified, and one other, which will close this chapter, is in effect the story of the whole war.

In August, 1804, Preble determined to change the blockade of Tripoli into a spirited attack upon the town and its defences. The attack was ineffective. Wooden ships proved no match for stone walls. There is, therefore, no need to go into detail as to the tactics adopted, but some of the picturesque incidents will be of interest.

Decatur's part in the enterprise was to seek to capture nine Tripolitan gunboats that formed part of the defensive force of the harbor. He had under his command four, but this slender force he led directly under the enemy's guns.

Fearfully were the Americans outnumbered. They could hope for no help from their friends in the men-of-war in the rear. They were hemmed in on all sides by hostile gunboats, more strongly manned, and heavier in metal, than they. They were outnumbered three to one; for gunboat No. 3, which had belonged to Decatur's division, had drawn out of the fight in obedience to a signal for recall, which had been displayed by mistake on the "Constitution." Then Decatur displayed his desperate courage. Signalling to his companions to close with their adversaries and board, he laid his vessel alongside the nearest gunboat; and in a trice every American of the crew was swarming over the enemy's bulwarks. Taken by surprise, the Turks retreated. The gunboat was divided down the centre by a long, narrow hatchway; and as the Yankees came tumbling over the bulwarks, the Turks retreated to the farther side. This gave Decatur time to rally his men; and, dividing them into two parties, he sent one party around by the stern of the boat, while he led the others around the bow. The Turks were dazed by the suddenness of the attack, and cowed

by the fearful effect of the Americans' last volley before boarding. Their captain lay dead, with fourteen bullets in his body. Many of the officers were wounded, and all the survivors were penned into a narrow space by the two parties of blue-jackets. The contest was short. Hampered by lack of room in which to wield their weapons, the Turks were shot down or bayoneted. Many leaped over the gunwale into the sea; many were thrown into the open hatchway; and the remnant, throwing down their arms, pleaded piteously for quarter. Decatur had no time to exult in his victory. Hastily securing his prisoners below decks, and making his prize fast to his own vessel, he bore down upon the Tripolitan next to leeward.

Meanwhile Decatur had been informed that his brother had been treacherously shot and killed by the captain of a Tripolitan gunboat after the flag had been struck.

Decatur's grief for the death of his brother gave way, for the time, to his anger on account of the base treachery by which the victim met his death. Casting prudence to the winds, he turned his boat's prow towards the gunboat of the murderer, and, urging on his rowers, soon laid the enemy aboard. Cutlass in hand, Decatur was first on the deck of the enemy. Behind him followed close Lieutenant Macdonough and nine blue-jackets. Nearly forty Turks were ready to receive the boarders. As the boarders came over the rail, they fired their pistols at the enemy, and then sprang down, cutlass in hand. The Turks outnumbered them five to one; but the Americans rallied in a bunch, and dealt lusty blows right and left. At last, Decatur singled out a man whom he felt sure was the commander, and the murderer of his brother. He was a man of gigantic frame; his head covered with a scarlet cap, his face half hidden by a bristly black

beard. He was armed with a heavy boarding-pike, with which he made a fierce lunge at Decatur. The American parried the blow, and made a stroke at the pike, hoping to cut off its point. But the force of the blow injured the Tripolitan's weapon not a whit, while Decatur's cutlass broke short off at the hilt. With a yell of triumph the Turk lunged again. Decatur threw up his arm, and partially avoided the thrust; so that the pike pierced his breast, but inflicted only a slight wound. Grappling the weapon, Decatur tore it from the wound, wrested it from the Turk, and made a lunge at him, which he avoided. The combatants then clinched and fell to the deck, fiercely struggling for life and death. About them fought their followers, who strove to aid their respective commanders. Suddenly a Tripolitan officer, who had fought his way to a place above the heads of the two officers, aimed a blow at the head of Decatur. His victim was powerless to guard himself. One American sailor only was at hand. This was Reuben James, a young man whose desperate fighting had already cost him wounds in both arms, so that he could not lift a hand to save his commander. But, though thus desperately wounded, James had yet one offering to lay before his captain—his life. And he showed himself willing to make this last and greatest sacrifice, by thrusting his head into the path of the descending scimitar, and taking upon his own skull the blow intended for Decatur. The hero fell bleeding to the deck; a pistol-shot from an American ended the career of the Turk, and Decatur was left to struggle with his adversary upon the deck.

But by this time the great strength of the Turkish captain was beginning to tell in the death-struggle. His right arm was clasped like an iron band around the American captain, while with his left hand he drew from his belt a short *yataghan*, which he was about to

plunge into the throat of his foe. Decatur lay on his side, with his eyes fixed upon the face of his foe. He saw the look of triumph flash in the eyes of the Turk; he saw the gleaming steel of the *yataghan* as it was drawn from its sheath. Mustering all his strength, he writhed in the grasp of his burly foe. He wrested his left arm clear, and caught the Turk's wrist just as the fatal blow was falling; then with his right hand he drew from his pocket a small pistol. Pressing this tightly against the back of his enemy, he fired. The ball passed through the body of the Turk, and lodged in Decatur's clothing. A moment later the Tripolitan's hold relaxed, and he fell back dead; while Decatur, covered with his own blood and that of his foe, rose to his feet, and stood amidst the pile of dead and wounded men that had gathered during the struggle around the battling chiefs.

The fall of their captain disheartened the Tripolitans, and they speedily threw down their arms. The prize was then towed out of the line of battle; and, as by this time the American gunboats were drawing off, Decatur took his prizes into the shelter of the flagship.

When the squadron had made an offing, Preble hoisted a signal for the commanders to come aboard the flagship, and make their reports. He was sorely disappointed in the outcome of the fray, and little inclined to recognize the conspicuous instances of individual gallantry shown by his officers. He had set his heart upon capturing the entire fleet of nine Tripolitan gunboats, and the escape of six of them had roused his naturally irascible disposition to fury. As he stalked his quarter-deck, morose and silent, Decatur came aboard. The young officer still wore the bloody, smoke-begrimed uniform in which he had grappled with the Turk, his face was begrimed with powder, his

hands and breast covered with blood. As he walked to the quarter-deck, he was the centre of observation of all on the flagship. Stepping up to the commodore, he said quietly:

"Well, commodore, I have brought you out three of the gunboats."

Preble turned upon him fiercely, seized him with both hands by the collar, and shaking him like a school-boy, snarled out:

"Ay, sir, why did you not bring me more?"

The blood rushed to Decatur's face. The insult was more than he could bear. His hand sought his dagger, but the commodore had left the quarter-deck. Turning on his heel, the outraged officer walked to the side, and called his boat, determined to leave the ship at once. But the officers crowded about him, begging him to be calm, and reminding him of the notoriously quick temper of the commodore. While they talked, there came a cabin steward with a message: "The commodore wishes to see Captain Decatur below." Decatur hesitated a moment, then obeyed. Some time passed, but he did not reappear on deck. The officers became anxious, and at last, upon some pretext, one sought the commodore's cabin. There he found Preble and Decatur, sitting together, friendly, but both silent, and in tears. The apology had been made and accepted.

There is one humble actor in the first attack upon Tripoli whom we cannot abandon without a word. This is Reuben James. That heroic young sailor quickly recovered from the bad wound he received when he interposed his own head to save his commander's life. One day Decatur called him aft, and publicly asked him what could be done to reward him for his unselfish heroism. The sailor was embarrassed and nonplussed. He rolled his quid of tobacco in his

mouth, and scratched his head, without replying. His shipmates were eager with advice. "Double pay, Jack: the old man will refuse you nothing"; "a boatswain's berth"; "a pocketful of money and shore leave," were among the suggestions. But James put them aside. He had decided.

"If you please, sir," said he, "let somebody else hand out the hammocks to the men when they are piped down. That is a sort of business that I don't exactly like."

The boon was granted; and ever afterwards, when the crew was piped to stow away hammocks, Reuben James sauntered about the decks with his hands in his pockets, the very personification of elegant leisure.

With one last instance of American gallantry on the ocean this survey of the events of the war with Tripoli may be closed. Commodore Preble, and the officers under his command, had about reached the conclusion that Tripoli could not be reduced by bombardment. Accordingly they cast about for some new method of attack. The plan that was finally adopted proved unfortunate in this instance, just as similar schemes for the reduction of fortresses have proved futile throughout all history. Briefly stated, the plan was to send a fire-ship, or rather a floating mine, into the harbor, to explode before the walls of the fortress, and in the midst of the enemy's cruisers.

The ketch "Intrepid," which had carried Decatur and his daring followers out of the harbor of Tripoli, leaving the "Philadelphia" burning behind them, was still with the fleet. This vessel was chosen, and with all possible speed was converted into an "infernal," or floating mine. "A small room, or magazine, had been planked up in the hold of the ketch, just forward of her principal mast," writes Fenimore Cooper. "Communicating with this magazine was a trunk, or

tube, that led aft to another room filled with combustibles. In the planked room, or magazine, were placed one hundred barrels of gunpowder in bulk; and on the deck, immediately above the powder, were laid fifty thirteen-and-a-half-inch shells, and one hundred nine-inch shells, with a large quantity of shot, pieces of kentledge, and fragments of iron of different sorts. A train was laid in the trunk, or tube, and fuses were attached in the proper manner. In addition to this arrangement, the other small room mentioned was filled with splinters and light wood, which, besides firing the train, were to keep the enemy from boarding, as the flames would be apt to induce them to apprehend an immediate explosion."

Such was the engine of death prepared. The plan of operations was simply to put a picked crew on this floating volcano, choose a dark night, take the "infernal" into the heart of the enemy's squadron, fire it, and let the crew escape in boats as best they might.

The leadership of this desperate enterprise was intrusted to Lieutenant Richard Somers. Indeed, it is probable that the idea itself originated with him, for a commanding officer would be little likely to assign a subordinate a duty so hazardous. Moreover, there existed between Decatur and Somers a generous rivalry. Each strove to surpass the other; and since Decatur's exploit with the "Philadelphia," Somers had been seeking an opportunity to win equal distinction. It is generally believed, that, having conceived the idea of the "infernal," he suggested it to Preble, and claimed for himself the right to execute it.

It was September 4th, the day following the last attack upon Tripoli. The sky was overcast and lowering, and gave promise of a dark night. Fully convinced that the time for action was at hand, Somers called together the handful of brave fellows who were

to follow him, and briefly addressed them. He told them he wished no man to go with him who did not prefer being blown up to being captured. For his part, he would much prefer such a fate, and he wished his followers to agree with him. For answer the brave fellows gave three cheers, and crowded round him, each asking to be selected to apply the match.

It was after dusk when the devoted adventurers boarded the powder-laden ketch, as she lay tossing at her anchorage. Shortly after they had taken possession, a boat came alongside with Decatur and Lieutenant Stewart in the stern-sheets. The officers greeted their comrades with some emotion. They were all about of an age, followed one loved profession, and each had given proofs of his daring. When the time came for them to part, the leave-taking was serious, but tranquil. Somers took from his finger a ring, and, breaking it into four pieces, gave one to each of his friends. Then with hearty handshakings, and good wishes for success, Decatur and Stewart left their friends.

As far as the harbor's mouth, she was accompanied by the "Argus," the "Vixen," and the "Nautilus." There they left her, and she pursued her way alone. It was a calm, foggy night. A few stars could be seen glimmering through the haze, and a light breeze ruffled the water, and wafted the sloop gently along her course. From the three vessels that waited outside the harbor's mouth, eager watchers with night-glasses kept their gaze riveted upon the spectral form of the ketch, as she slowly receded from their sight. Fainter and fainter grew the outline of her sails, until at last they were lost to sight altogether. Then fitful flashes from the enemy's batteries, and the harsh thunder of the cannon, told that she had been sighted by the foe. The anxious watchers paced their decks with

bated breath. Though no enemy was near to hear them, they spoke in whispers. The shadow of a great awe, the weight of some great calamity, seemed crushing them.

“What was that?”

All started at the abrupt exclamation. Through the haze a glimmering light had been seen to move rapidly along the surface of the water, as though a lantern were being carried along a deck. Suddenly it disappeared, as though dropped down a hatchway. A few seconds passed,—seconds that seemed like hours. Then there shot up into the sky a dazzling jet of fire. A roar like that of a huge volcano shook earth and sea. The vessels trembled at their moorings. The concussion of the air threw men upon the decks. Then the mast of the ketch, with its sail blazing, was seen to rise straight into the air, and fall back. Bombs with burning fuses flew in every direction. The distant sound of heavy bodies falling into the water and on the rocks was heard. Then all was still. Even the Tripolitan batteries were silent.

For a moment a great sorrow fell upon the Americans. Then came the thought that Somers and his brave men might have left the ketch before the explosion. All listened for approaching oars. Minutes lengthened into hours, and still no sound was heard. Men hung from the sides of the vessels, with their ears to the water, in the hope of catching the sound of the coming boats. But all was in vain. Day broke; the shattered wreck of the “Intrepid” could be seen within the harbor, and near it two injured Tripolitan gunboats. But of Somers and his brave fellows no trace could be seen, nor were they ever again beheld by their companions.

It may be said that this episode terminated the war with Tripoli. Thereafter it was but a series of block-

ades and diplomatic negotiations. Commodore Barron relieved Preble, and maintained the blockade, without any offensive operations, until peace was signed in June, 1805. The conditions of that peace cannot be too harshly criticised. By it the United States paid sixty thousand dollars for American prisoners in the hands of the Bashaw, thus yielding to demands for ransom which no civilized nation should for a moment have considered. The concession was all the more unnecessary, because a native force of insurrectionists, reinforced by a few Americans, was marching upon Tripoli from the rear, and would have soon brought the Bashaw to terms. But it was not the part of the navy to negotiate the treaty. That rested with the civilians. The duty of the blue-jackets had been to fight for their country's honor; and that they had discharged this duty well, no reader of these pages can deny.

CHAPTER VIII

The Quasi-war with France—"Constellation" and "Insurgente"—
Decatur Once More—"Little Jarvis," a Boy Herc.

THERE has been no more curious episode in the history of the United States, or perhaps in all history of modern times, than the spluttering war on the sea with the French in the years 1798-1800. The two countries were at peace. Their peoples expressed and felt for each other the liveliest friendship, even affection. Franklin had not been forgotten in France, nor Lafayette in America. The two governments were amicable. A French minister was at Philadelphia; an American at Versailles. And yet on the ocean French and American ships were fighting pitched and sanguinary battles, in which the defeated one, instead of being made a prize, refitted and sailed away to some friendly port while the victor expressed polite regret for the occurrence.

It all grew out of the war between France and England, with the English insistence upon impressing American seamen as the irritating cause. That practice, which, as we have seen, had so much to do with bringing on the war of the Revolution, had been revived with increased vigor by the British. France thought it saw in this an opportunity to force the young United States to become its ally against the Island Nation.

Accordingly an order was issued to all French men-of-war to treat American vessels exactly as the Americans permitted themselves to be treated by the British. So if a British man-of-war pressed three men from an American brig, the first French man-of-war to detect the fact would press three more. Thus between the

upper and nether millstones was the growing commerce of the young nation ground. But in 1799 the patience of the American government was exhausted, and such ships as were in commission were sent to inflict reprisals upon the French privateers. But all the while there was no declaration of war.

The war was very real, however, even without any declaration, as may well be judged from the story of some typical actions. The absence of a formal declaration of war made many French privateers assume an injured air, on being captured by United States ships. With a Frenchman of this sort, Stephen Decatur the younger had an experience early in his naval career.

This occurred in February, 1799. The frigate "United States" was cruising near Martinique in that year, and to her young Decatur was attached as a sub-lieutenant. One morning a French privateer was sighted, and the frigate set out in hot pursuit. The privateer took the alarm quickly, and crowded on all sail, until her long, narrow hull slipped through the waves like a fish. The breeze was fresh, and the chase an exciting one; but gradually the immense spread of the frigate's canvas began to tell, and she rapidly overhauled the fugitive. The French captain was plucky, and even desperate, in his attempt to escape; for, seeing that he was about to be overhauled, he resorted to the expedient of a fox chased by hounds, and doubled, turning short to windward, and running right under the guns of the frigate. The move was a bold one, and might well have succeeded, had it not been for the good marksmanship of a gunner on the frigate, who promptly sent a twenty-four-pound shot (the only one fired in the affair) straight through the hull of the privateer, between wind and water. In an instant all was confusion on the French vessel. The water poured into her hold through the hole cut by the shot; and

the hasty lowering of her sails, and the frantic howls for succor from the crew, told the people of the "United States" that their chase was at an end. The boats of the frigate were quickly lowered, and Decatur went in one as officer in command. When he reached the sinking ship, he found a scene too ludicrous to be pathetic. Along the rail of the vessel, from bow to stern, the Frenchmen were perched like birds. Many had stripped off all their clothes, in order to be prepared to swim; and from all arose a medley of plaintive cries for help, and curses on that unlucky shot. By skilful management of the boats, all were saved; and it happened that Decatur pulled into his own boat the captain of the sinking vessel.

Brushing the salt water out of his eyes, this worthy expressed great surprise that he had been fired upon by a vessel bearing the United States flag.

"Ees eet that that ees a sheep of les États-Unis?" he inquired, in the broken English that four years of cruising against Americans had enabled him to pick up.

"It is," responded Decatur.

"I am indeed sairprised. I had not thought that les États-Unis had the war with La République Française."

"No, sir," responded Decatur, thoroughly provoked; "but you knew that the French Republic was at war with the United States, that you were taking our merchant-vessels every day, and crowding our countrymen into prison at Basseterre to die like sheep."

A later and a fiercer contest occurred between the "Constellation" and the "Insurgente." The American ship was cruising in the West Indies and encountered a man-of-war which failed to show her colors. Signals were set, but no answering signal came. At last, after long "jockeying," the stranger showed French colors, and the battle was on! This, too, when

no war existed between the United States and France. The challenging colors were raised by the Frenchman.

On the "Constellation" the challenge aroused universal enthusiasm. For the first time since the Revolution, the gallant defenders of the Stars and Stripes were to have an opportunity to try their strength with a hostile man-of-war. The enemy seemed no less ready for the conflict, and waited gallantly for the "Constellation" to come down to closer quarters. From both ships came the roll of the drums and the shrill pipings of the bo's'n's whistle, as the men were called to quarters. Then all became still, and the two frigates bore down upon each other. Neither antagonist was hasty about opening fire, and the report of the first gun came from the Yankee when she had come into point-blank range. Then began the thunderous broadsides, that soon enveloped the hulls of the two ships in dense gray smoke; so that, to an observer at a little distance, all that could be seen of the fight was the tapering masts and yard-arms, above the smoke, crowded with sailors repairing damages, and nimble young midshipmen shrilly ordering about the grizzled seamen, and now and again taking a crack at the enemy with pistol or musket, by way of recreation. In the foretop of the "Constellation" was stationed young David Porter, who in that trying moment showed the result of his hard schooling in the merchant-service, of which we have spoken. By the rapid fire of the enemy, the foretopmast was badly cut, and there was great danger that it might go by the board. Porter hailed the deck several times for instructions, but, finding that his voice could not be heard above the roar of battle, determined to act upon his own responsibility, and accordingly cut away the sails, lowered the yards, and, by relieving the injured spar of all strain, prevented its falling. In the meantime the battle raged fiercely



COMMODORE STEPHEN DECATUR

below. The American frigate was more powerful in her armament, and better handled, than the Frenchman. Her guns were handled with deliberation, and the aim of the gunners was sure and deadly; while the shot from the enemy went hurtling through the rigging of the "Constellation," doing but little damage. The decks of the Frenchman were covered with dead and wounded, and at last two raking broadsides from the American frigate ended the conflict. When the vanquished ship was boarded, she proved to be the "Insurgente," the same frigate that had captured the "Retaliation" some months before. Her loss in this engagement amounted to twenty-nine killed and forty-one wounded, while the cockpit of the "Constellation" was tenanted by but three wounded men; and but one American had lost his life, he having been killed by an officer, for cowardice. Both ships were badly cut up in the engagement.

The news of this victory was received with great rejoicing in the United States, and was celebrated with cannon-firing and the ringing of bells. At Boston, the fourth Sunday in March was set for a day of general rejoicing; and on that day huge crowds gathered in State Street, and after salutes had been fired, and the city's bells pealed, the people, at a given signal, joined in three mighty cheers, that fairly shook the surrounding houses, for Truxton, the "Constellation," the blue-jackets, and the success of the wooden walls of America.

Even after the "Insurgente" had struck her flag, the tars of the "Constellation" found they had an elephant on their hands. The work of transferring the prisoners was begun, and actively prosecuted; but, when night fell, there were still nearly two hundred Frenchmen on the prize. The wind was rising fast, and the long rollers of the Atlantic were being lashed into foaming breakers by the rising gale. It was

hazardous for the two vessels to continue near each other; and Lieutenant Rodgers, with Midshipman Porter and eleven men, was detailed to take charge of the prize, and bring her into port. When the officers boarded the prize, they found that they had indeed a desperate undertaking before them. It was difficult enough for thirteen men to handle the great ship, without having to keep in subjection one hundred and seventy-three captives. To add to the danger, the gratings had been thrown overboard, and there was no way of confining the captives in the hold. A careful search for handcuffs resulted only in failure. But Rodgers was a man of decision, and Porter, though but a boy, was bold and determined; and between them they solved the problem. The prisoners were ordered below; and a sentinel was placed at each hatchway, with orders to shoot the first man who should attempt to come on deck. Howitzers loaded with grape were trained upon the hatchway, for use in case of an organized movement of the prisoners. For three days the officers sustained this fearful strain, without a moment's sleep; but their labors were finally crowned by successfully bringing the ship and prisoners into St. Kitts.

In the second pitched battle of the war, the "Constellation" was again the American combatant; but this time, though the fight was a glorious one, it did not terminate so fortunately for the American ship. It was on the 1st of February, 1800, that the gallant frigate, under the same commander, was cruising about her old hunting-grounds, near Guadaloupe. A sail was sighted, which, after a careful examination through his marine-glass, Commodore Truxton pronounced to be an English merchantman. As an invitation to the stranger to approach, English colors were hoisted on the "Constellation," but had only the effect of causing

the stranger to sheer off; for she was, indeed, a French war-vessel. Perplexed by the actions of the mysterious ship, the "Constellation" gave chase, and soon came near enough to see that she had caught a Tartar; for the vessel was the French frigate "La Vengeance," mounting fifty-two guns. Although a more powerful vessel than the American, she continued her flight; while the gallant Truxton, caring nothing for the odds against him, kept on in hot pursuit. All the remainder of that day, and until noon of the next, the chase continued, with but little change in the position of the ships. "A stern chase is a long chase," thought the jackies on the "Constellation"; but they were not discouraged, and only crowded on the more sail. On the afternoon of the second day, the American began to gain rapidly; and by eight at night the two ships were within speaking distance of each other. Truxton mounted the rail, and shouted through a speaking-trumpet, "What ship is that?" The only answer was a shot from the stern-port of the Frenchman, and the fight was opened.

It was then growing dark, though the faint glow of the long tropic twilight still lingered on the western horizon. Above the towering masts of the two great frigates, the stars gleamed with a brilliancy seldom seen in more northern latitudes. As the ships rushed through the water, the waves broke against the bows, and fell back in masses of phosphorescent light; while the wakes of the vessels could be traced far back into the darkness,—two parallel paths of light, that glowed and sparkled like the milky way that spanned the starry sky above.

Side by side the two frigates ploughed through the water. The creaking of their cordage, and the rushing of the wind through the rigging, mingled with the thunder of the cannonade, which, though slow, and

made up of single reports, when the "Constellation" was confined to the use of her bow-chasers, soon rose to thunderous broadsides as the two ships came side to side. As the twilight died away, the two contestants were enveloped in almost total darkness, save for the fitful flashes of the cannon, and the red glare of the battle-lanterns that hung from the shrouds. The gunners had for a target nothing but a black, shapeless mass, that could be seen rushing through the waves some hundreds of yards away. But this did not prevent fearful execution being done on both sides. For five hours the two ships kept up the running fight. The ponderous eighteen and forty-two-pound shot of the enemy crashed into the "Constellation," or swept her decks, doing dreadful damage. The deck was strewn with dead and dying men, and the surgeons down in the cockpit soon had their tables full of moaning sufferers. No one could tell what might be the condition of "La Vengeance"; but her regular fire told that she was in no wise disabled. At one o'clock in the morning, the sound of her guns seemed to be more distant; and by the flash of the cannon it was seen that she was drawing out of the fight. The Americans cheered lustily, and Truxton ordered that his ship be braced up in chase.

But the fire of the enemy had been rapid and well-directed; and now, at this critical moment, its results were to rob the "Constellation" of her victory. As the ships were brought about, to follow in the track of the flying "Vengeance," an officer came rushing to the quarter-deck, and reported that all the shrouds and braces of the foremast had been shot away, and the mast was in momentary danger of falling. The rigging had been so literally cut in pieces by the fire of the enemy, that splicing was out of the question; but Truxton, in the hope of saving his mast, called all

hands from the guns, and the fire of the "Constellation" stopped.

Up in the foretop was stationed Midshipman Jarvis, with a dozen or more of jackies, whose duty it was to mend the cordage of the topmast, and to keep up a musketry fire upon the enemy. Long before the officer of the deck had reported the danger of the foremast, one of the topmen had told Jarvis, who was but a lad, that the mast was likely to fall.

"Ay, ay, my lad," responded the plucky young officer; "but our place is here, and we must go with it."

The sailors on the deck below worked manfully: but, notwithstanding all their efforts, the mast soon went by the board; and Jarvis and his brave comrades were thrown far out into the black water, never to be seen again.

The fall of the foremast ended the battle for the "Constellation." Helpless, and cumbered by the wreck, she tossed about on the water, while her foe made good her escape. What might have been the outcome of the conflict, had it continued, it is impossible to tell. "La Vengeance" carried heavier metal and a larger crew than the American frigate; and Truxton, with all his dash, found no mean adversary in Captain Pitot. Yet the condition of the French ship when she came into port at Curaçoa showed that the fire of the Yankee gunners had been rapid and accurate. Fifty of the enemy were killed, and one hundred and ten wounded; while, of the Americans, only thirty-nine appeared on the lists of killed and wounded. It was said at the time that Captain Pitot reported having struck his flag three times; hoisting it again, on finding that in the darkness the "Constellation" took no notice of the surrender. But this seems, on the face of it, improbable; and the action can hardly be awarded

to either ship, although the gallantry shown on either side was enough to win a victory.

It may well be imagined that this brilliant action, together with the capture of "L'Insurgente," made the "Constellation" the most popular ship of the navy; a place which she held until the stirring events of the war with England pushed the "Constitution" so far to the front, that even now, when she lies dismantled and rotting at the Brooklyn navy-yard, Americans still think of "Old Ironsides" as the typical ship of our once glorious navy.

Such were the striking incidents of a war that was not a war. In these modern days such a conflict would be impossible. Not merely the law of nations, but the conscience of nations would prevent its repetition. Even more than that, the change in naval armament in the size, power, and cost of ships has changed the whole trend of naval tactics. The quasi-war with the French is a chapter in history that can never be repeated.

CHAPTER IX

War of 1812—British Pressgang Methods—The "Chesapeake" and "Leopard"—The "President" and "Little Belt"—Disparity of the Two Navies—"Constitution" and "Guerriere."

PERHAPS the greatest advantage that came to the young American nation from the half-way war with France lay in the fact that it brought the American warships out of retirement, gave their officers and crews practice in actual warfare, and fitted them for the more serious conflict with Great Britain which soon became inevitable. The struggle, of which we are about to tell the story, grew out of the insistence of the British upon the right (as they called it) of impressing American seamen. Curiously enough, although the war ended with all the honors of the ocean won by the blue-jackets of the Union, the treaty finally signed made no mention of the prime issue on which the conflict was waged. But it is a matter of history that wars seldom settle the actual quarrel; often create new and equally puzzling problems. The war between the United States and Spain, for example, left this nation in possession of the Philippines—a territory practically unknown to our people before Dewey's victory. The War of 1812 did not settle the question of impressment, except in so far as it demonstrated the ability of the young nation to defend its sailors' rights.

Let us recount some instances of the methods employed by the British navy at that time which finally stung Americans into retaliation:

In 1807 the United States frigate "Chesapeake," then lying at the navy-yard at Washington, was put in commission, and ordered to the Mediterranean, to

relieve the "Constitution." Nearly a month was consumed in making necessary repairs to hull and cordage, taking in stores, shipping a crew, and attending to the thousand and one details of preparation for sea that a long time out of commission makes necessary to a man-of-war. While the preparations for service were actively proceeding, the British minister informed the naval authorities that three deserters from His British Majesty's ship "Melampus" had joined the crew of the "Chesapeake"; and it was requested that they should be given up. The request was made with due courtesy; and, although there is no principle of international law which directs the surrender of deserters, yet the United States, as a friendly nation, was inclined to grant the request, and an inquiry was made into the case. The facts elicited put the surrender of the men out of the question; for though they frankly confessed to have deserted from the "Melampus," yet they claimed to have been impressed into the British service, and proved conclusively that they were free Americans. This was reported to the British minister; and, as he made no further protests, it was assumed that he was satisfied.

Some weeks later the vessel left the navy-yard, and dropped down the river to Hampton Roads. Even with the long period occupied in preparation for sea, the armament of the ship was far from being in order; a fact first discovered as she passed Mount Vernon, as she was unable to fire the salute with which at that time all passing war-vessels did honor to the tomb of Washington. After some days' stay at Hampton Roads, during which time additional guns and stores were taken on, and the crew increased to three hundred and seventy-five men, the ship got under way, and started on her voyage.

It was on a breezy morning of June that the "Chesa-

peake " left the broad harbor of Hampton Roads, the scene of so many of our naval glories. From the masthead of the frigate floated the broad pennant of Commodore Barron, who went out in command of the ship. The decks were littered with ropes, lumber, and stores, which had arrived too late to be properly stowed away. Some confusion is but natural on a ship starting on a cruise which may continue for years, but the condition of the " Chesapeake " was beyond all excuse; a fact for which the fitting-out officers, not her commander, were responsible.

As the American ship passed out into the open ocean, there was a great stir on the decks of four English cruisers that lay quietly at anchor in Lynn Haven Bay; and almost immediately one of these vessels hoisted her anchor, set her sails, and started out in the track of the frigate. A stiff head-wind blowing, the American was forced to tack frequently, in order to get ahead; and her officers noticed that the British ship (the " Leopard," of fifty guns) tacked at the same time, and was evidently following doggedly in the wake of the " Chesapeake." No suspicion that the pursuer had other than peaceful motives in view entered the minds of the American officers; and the ship kept on her course, while the sailors set about putting the decks in order, and getting the vessel in trim for her long voyage. While all hands were thus busily engaged, the " Leopard " bore down rapidly, and soon hailed, saying that she had a despatch for Commodore Barron. The " Chesapeake " accordingly hove to, and waited for a boat to be sent aboard.

The two ships now lay broadside to broadside, and only about a half pistol-shot apart. No idea that the Englishman had any hostile designs seems to have occurred to Commodore Barron; but some of the younger officers noticed that the ports of the " Leopard " were

triced up, and the tomppions taken out of the muzzles of the cannon. The latter fact was of the gravest import, and should have been reported at once to the commander; but it appears that this was not done.

In a few moments a boat put off from the "Leopard," and pulled to the American ship, where an officer stood waiting at the gangway, and conducted the visitor to Barron's cabin. Here the English lieutenant produced an order, signed by the British Admiral Berkeley, commanding all British ships to watch for the "Chesapeake," and search her for deserters. Commodore Barron immediately responded, that the "Chesapeake" harbored no deserters, and he could not permit his crew to be mustered by the officer of any foreign power. Hardly had this response been made, when a signal from the "Leopard" recalled the boarding officer to his ship.

The officers of the "Chesapeake" were now fully aroused to the dangers of the situation, and began the attempt to get the ship in readiness for action. Commodore Barron, coming out of his cabin for the first time, was forcibly struck by the air of preparation for action presented by the "Leopard." Captain Gordon, the second in command, was ordered to hasten the work on the gun-deck, and call the crew to quarters. The drummers began to beat the call to quarters, but hasty orders soon stopped them; and the men went to their places quietly, hoping that the threatening attitude of the "Leopard" was mere bravado.

The most painful suspense was felt by all on board the American ship. The attitude of the "Leopard" left little doubt of her hostile intentions, while a glance about the decks of the "Chesapeake" told how little fitted she was to enter into action. Her crew was a new one, never exercised at the guns, and had been mustered to quarters only three times. On the gun-

deck lay great piles of cumbrous cables, from the coiling of which the men had been summoned by the call to quarters. On the after-deck were piles of furniture, trunks, and some temporary pantries. What little semblance of order there was, was due to the efforts of one of the lieutenants, who, suspecting trouble when the "Leopard" first came up, had made great exertions toward getting the ship clear. While the captain stood looking ruefully at the confusion, still more serious troubles were reported. The guns were loaded; but no rammers, powder-flasks, matches, wads, or gun-locks could be found. While search was being made for these necessary articles, a hail came from the "Leopard." Commodore Barron shouted back that he did not understand.

"Commodore Barron must be aware that the orders of the vice-admiral must be obeyed," came the hail again.

Barron again responded that he did not understand. After one or two repetitions, the British determined to waste no more time in talking; and a single shot fired from the bow of the "Leopard" was quickly followed by a full broadside. The heavy shot crashed into the sides of the "Chesapeake," wounding many of the men, and adding to the confusion on the gun-deck. No answer came from the American frigate; for, though the guns were loaded, there was no way of firing them. Matches, locks, or loggerheads were nowhere to be found. Mad with rage at the helpless condition in which they found themselves, the officers made every effort to fire at least one volley. Pokers were heated red-hot in the galley-fire, and carried hastily to the guns, but cooled too rapidly in the rush across the deck. In the meantime, the "Leopard," none too chivalric to take advantage of an unresisting foe, had chosen her position, and was pouring in a deliberate

fire. For nearly eighteen minutes the fire was continued, when the flag of the "Chesapeake" was hauled down. Just as it came fluttering from the masthead, Lieutenant Allen, crying, "I'll have one shot at those rascals, anyhow," ran to the galley, picked up a live coal in his fingers, and carried it, regardless of the pain, to the nearest gun, which was successfully discharged. This was the only shot that the "Chesapeake" fired during the affair,—battle it cannot be called.

A boat with two British lieutenants and several midshipmen on board speedily boarded the "Chesapeake," and the demand for the deserters was renewed. Four seamen were seized, and borne away in triumph; but the British commander refused to receive the ship as a prize, and even went so far as to express his regret at the loss of life, and proffer his aid in repairing the damages. Both sympathy and assistance were indignantly rejected; and the disgraced ship went sullenly back to Norfolk, bearing a sorely mortified body of officers and seamen. Of the four kidnapped sailors, it may be stated here, that one was hanged, and the other three forced to enter the British service, in which one died. His comrades, five years later, were restored to the deck of the ship from which they had been taken.

The news of this event spread like wildfire over the country, and caused rage and resentment wherever it was known. Cities, towns, and villages called for revenge. The President issued a proclamation, complaining of the habitual insolence of British cruisers, and ordering all such vessels to leave American waters forthwith. As in the reduced state of the navy it was impossible to enforce this order, he forbade all citizens of the United States to give aid to, or have any intercourse with, any such vessels or their crews.

War measures were taken both by the Federal and State Governments. As usual, the popular wrath was vented upon the least culpable of the people responsible for the condition of the "Chesapeake." Commodore Barron was tried by court-martial, and sentenced to five years' suspension from the service, without pay. The cool judgment of later years perceives the unjustness of this sentence, but its execution cast a deep shadow over the remainder of the unhappy officer's life.

Three years passed before the first opportunity for effective retaliation presented itself.

On May 7, 1811, the United States frigate "President" was lying quietly at anchor off Fort Severn, Annapolis. Everything betokened a state of perfect peace. The muzzles of the great guns were stopped by tompions. The ports were down. In the rigging of the vessel hung garments drying in the sun. At the side floated half a dozen boats. Many of the crew were ashore on leave. The sailing-master was at Baltimore, and the chaplain and purser were at Washington. From the masthead floated the broad pennant of Commodore Rodgers, but he was with his family at Havre de Grace; and the executive officer, Captain Ludlow, was dining on the sloop-of-war "Argus," lying near at hand. But the captain's dinner was destined to be interrupted that bright May afternoon; for in the midst of the repast a midshipman entered, and reported that the commodore's gig was coming up rapidly, with Rodgers himself on board. The dinner party was hastily broken up, and the captain returned to his ship to receive his superior officer. On his arrival, Commodore Rodgers said that he had received orders to chase a frigate that had impressed a sailor from the "Spitfire," and insist upon the man's being liberated, if he could prove his citizenship. This was good news

for every man on the frigate. At last, then, the United States was going to protect its sailors.

Three days were spent in getting the crew together and preparing for sea; then the stately frigate, with all sails set and colors flying, weighed anchor, and stood down the Chesapeake with the intention of cruising near New York. She had been out on the open ocean only a day, when the lookout, from his perch in the crosstrees, reported a strange sail on the horizon. The two vessels approached each other rapidly; and, as the stranger drew near, Rodgers saw, by the squareness of her yards and the general trim, symmetrical cut of her sails, that she was a war-vessel.

A little after eight in the evening the "President" was within a hundred yards of the chase, which could be seen, a dark mass with bright lights shining through the rows of open ports, rushing through the water directly ahead. Rodgers sprang upon the taffrail, and putting a speaking-trumpet to his lips, shouted, "What ship is that?" A dead silence followed. Those on the "President" listened intently for the answer; but no sound was heard save the sigh of the wind through the cordage, the creaking of the spars, and the rush of the water alongside. Rodgers hailed again; and, before the sound of his words had died away, a quick flash of fire leaped from the stern-ports of the chase, and a shot whizzed through the rigging of the "President," doing some slight damage. Rodgers sprang to the deck to order a shot in return; but, before he could do so, a too eager gunner pulled the lanyard of his piece in the second division of the "President's" battery. The enemy promptly answered with three guns, and then let fly a whole broadside, with discharges of musketry from the deck and the tops. This exhausted Rodgers's patience. "Equally determined," said he afterwards, "not to be the aggressor, or to suffer

the flag of my country to be insulted with impunity, I gave a general order to fire." This time there was no defect in the ordnance or the gunnery of the American ship. The broadsides rang out at regular intervals, and the aim of the gunners was deliberate and deadly. It was too dark to see what effect the fire was having on the enemy, but in five minutes her responses began to come slowly and feebly. Unwilling to continue his attack on a ship evidently much his inferior in size and armament, Rodgers ordered the gunners to cease firing; but this had hardly been done when the stranger opened again. A second time the guns of the "President" were run out, and again they began their cannonade. The stranger was soon silenced again; and Commodore Rodgers hailed, that he might learn the name of his adversary. In answer came a voice from the other vessel:

"We are his Majesty's ship——" A gust of wind carried away the name, and Rodgers was still in doubt as to whom he had been fighting. Hoisting a number of bright lights in her rigging, that the stranger might know her whereabouts, the "President" stood off and on during the night, ready to give aid to the disabled ship in case of need.

At early dawn every officer was on deck, anxious to learn the fate of their foe of the night before. Far in the distance they could see a ship, whose broken cordage and evident disorder showed her to have been the other party to the fight. A boat from the "President" visited the stranger, to learn her name and to proffer aid in repairing the damages received in the action. The ship proved to be the British sloop-of-war "Little Belt"; and her captain stated that she was much damaged in her masts, sails, rigging, and hull, and had been cut several times between wind and water. He declined the proffered aid, however, and

sailed away to Halifax, the nearest British naval station. Commodore Rodgers took the "President" to the nearest American port.

Another incident showed that the hatred of the British service that prevailed among seamen was a matter of deep-seated conviction. While the United States ship "Essex" was lying in an English port, it became known that one of her crew was a deserter from the British navy, and his surrender was immediately demanded. Although the man stoutly protested that he was an American, yet no proof could be shown; and, as the ship was in British waters, it was determined to surrender him. A British officer and squad of marines boarded the "Essex" and waited on the deck while the sailor went below to get his kit. Bitterly complaining of the hardness of his fate, the poor fellow went along the gun-decks until he passed the carpenter's bench. His eye fell upon an axe; and after a minute's hesitation he stepped to the bench, seized the axe in his right hand, and with one blow cut off the left. Carrying the severed member in his hand, he again sought the deck and presented himself, maimed, bleeding, and forever useless as a sailor, to the British officer. Astonished and horrified, that worthy left the ship, and the wounded man was sent to the sick-bay. The incident was a forcible commentary on the state of the British service at that time, and left a deep impression on the minds of all beholders.

In the next contest over deserters, however, the Americans rather secured the best of the argument. The "Constitution" was lying at anchor in Portsmouth roads, when one of the crew silyly slipped overboard and swam down with the tide to the British ship "Madagascar" that lay at anchor near by. When he had reached the Englishman, he was too exhausted to speak; and the officers, supposing that he had fallen

overboard accidentally, sent word to the "Constitution" that her man had been saved, and awaited the orders of his commander. The next morning a boat was sent down to the "Madagascar" to fetch the man back; but, to the astonishment of the visiting officer, he was told that the sailor claimed to be a British subject and wished to escape from the American service.

"Have you any evidence," asked the American officer of the British admiral, "beyond the man's own word, that he is an Englishman?"

"None whatever, sir," was the response, "but we are obliged to take his declaration to that effect."

The American officer returned to his ship, vowing vengeance on the harborers of the deserter. His opportunity came that very night.

In the dead watches of the night, when all was still on deck save the monotonous tramp of the sentries, there suddenly rang out on the still air the sharp crack of a musket. The officer of the deck rushed to see what was the matter, and was shown a dark object floating near the ship, at which a sentry had fired. A boat was lowered and soon came back, bringing in it a sailor who had deserted from the "Madagascar," and reached the "Constitution" by swimming. Captain Hull asked the fellow his nationality.

"Sure, Oi'm a 'Merricun, your honor," he answered in a rich brogue that would have branded him as a Paddy in any part of the world. With a twinkle in his eye, Hull sent the Irishman below, and told the sailors to take good care of him.

Early in the morning, a boat came from the "Madagascar"; and a trim young lieutenant, clambering aboard the American frigate, politely requested that the deserter be given up. With great dignity, Captain Hull responded that the man was a citizen of the United States, and should have protection. The visit-

ing officer fairly gasped for breath. "An American!" he exclaimed. "Why, the man has never been out of Ireland except on a British man-of-war."

"Indeed!" responded Hull blandly. "But we have his statement that he is an American, and we are obliged to take his declaration to that effect." And the man was never given up.

Such occurrences as these could not fail to bring even friendly nations to open war—and there can be no idea that in these days there was any friendliness between the people of the United States and Great Britain. Yet neither government wished for war, and it was not until actual hostilities had long lasted that the fateful declaration was issued.

Of that conflict this may be said: On land the United States forces won no glory until the battle of New Orleans, which, curiously enough, was fought by General Andrew Jackson after the treaty of peace had been concluded. On the ocean our ships were almost uniformly successful, the only serious disasters being the loss of the "Chesapeake" to the "Shannon," and the loss of the "Essex" off Valparaiso harbor. For both there were distinct reasons, in nowise discreditable to the American commanders, and which will be set forth in the account of these actions.

So far as ocean operations were concerned it was a war of individual ships. The only fleet actions were on inland waters. It will be the simplest way of telling the story to deal with the salt water battles first, taking up Perry on Lake Erie, and McDonough on Lake Champlain in a later chapter. Even on the ocean it appeared at first that the war was to be characterized by official over-caution, if not, indeed, timidity. Perhaps the timidity was to some extent justified. At the moment the naval rolls of Great Britain bore the names of over one thousand ships. Of these no fewer

than two hundred and fifty-four were ships of the line, mounting seventy-four or more guns each. To oppose this force, at that time the most powerful in the world, the United States had twenty vessels of which the largest rated forty-four, and the majority less than thirty guns. It is small wonder that the national government was appalled at the odds, and at first determined to lay the ships up in port, using them as floating batteries for the defence of harbors and avoiding all cruises. It is to the eternal credit of the American navy that this determination on the part of President Madison was stoutly opposed by all commanding officers. Had it stood, some of the brightest chapters in American naval annals would have remained unwritten.

The first notable action of the war was the one that made the name of the gallant frigate "Constitution" a household word in the United States for a century thereafter. After narrowly escaping capture by a fleet of five hostile vessels the "Constitution" was cruising along the New England coast when a Salem privateer was overhauled, the captain of which reported an English frigate cruising in the neighborhood; and Captain Hull straightway set out to discover the enemy.

The frigate which had been sighted by the Salem privateer, and for which Hull was so eagerly seeking, was the "Guerriere," a thirty-eight-gun ship commanded by Captain Dacres. With both ship and captain, Captain Hull had previously had some little experience. The "Guerriere" was one of the ships in the squadron from which the "Constitution" had so narrowly escaped a few weeks before, while Captain Dacres was an old acquaintance. A story current at the time relates, that, before the war, the "Guerriere" and the "Constitution" were lying in the Delaware; and the two captains, happening to meet at some en-

tertainment on shore, fell into a discussion over the merits of their respective navies. Although even then the cloud of war was rising on the horizon, each was pleasant and good-natured; and the discussion assumed no more serious form than lively banter.

"Well," said Hull at last, "you may just take good care of that ship of yours, if ever I catch her in the 'Constitution.'"

Captain Dacres laughed good-humoredly, and offered to bet a sum of money, that in the event of a conflict his confident friend would find himself the loser.

"No," said Hull, "I'll bet no money on it; but I will stake you a hat, that the 'Constitution' comes out victorious."

"Done," responded Dacres; and the bet was made. War was soon declared; and, as it happened, the two friends were pitted against each other early in the hostilities.

It was not long after the American frigate parted from the privateer when the long-drawn hail of "Sail ho-o-o!" from the lookout aloft announced the discovery of another vessel. The course of the "Constitution" was at once shaped toward the stranger. In half an hour she was made out to be a frigate, and from her actions was evidently anxious to come alongside the American ship. As more than an hour must elapse before the ships could come together, Captain Hull made his preparations for action with the greatest deliberation. The top-gallant sails were furled, and the lighter spars lowered to the deck. Through their glasses, the officers could see the enemy making similar preparations, and waiting deliberately for the "Constitution" to come down.

At five o'clock in the afternoon the two ships were rapidly nearing, and the drums on the American frigate beat to quarters. Then followed the rush of bare-

footed men along the deck, as they ran hastily, but in perfect order, to their stations. As the roll of the drums died away, the shrill voices of the boyish midshipmen arose, calling off the quarter-bills, and answered by the gruff responses of the men at their posts. Every man, from the cook to the captain, knew his place, and hurried to it. The surgeon, with his assistants, descended to the cockpit. The carpenter and his mates made ready their felt-covered plugs, for stopping holes made by the enemy's shot. The topmen clambered to their posts in the rigging, led by the midshipmen who were to command them. The line of powder-passers was formed; and the powder-monkeys gave up skylarking, and began to look sober at the thought of the business in hand.

The "Guerriere" was not behindhand in her preparations for action. Captain Dacres had suspected the character of the American vessel, from the first moment she had been sighted. On board the English frigate was Captain William B. Orne, a Marblehead sailor who had been captured by the "Guerriere" some days before. "Captain Dacres seemed anxious to ascertain her character," wrote Captain Orne, shortly after the battle, "and after looking at her for that purpose, handed me his spy-glass, requesting me to give him my opinion of the stranger. I soon saw, from the peculiarity of her sails and her general appearance, that she was without doubt an American frigate, and communicated the same to Captain Dacres. He immediately replied, that he thought she came down too boldly for an American; but soon after added, 'The better he behaves, the more credit we shall gain by taking him.'

"The two ships were rapidly approaching each other, when the 'Guerriere' backed her main topsail, and waited for her opponent to come down and com-

mence the action. He then set an English flag at each masthead, beat to quarters, and made ready for the fight.

"When the strange frigate came down to within two or three miles distant, he hauled upon the wind, took in all his light sails, reefed his topsails, and deliberately prepared for action. It was now about five in the afternoon, when he filled away and ran down for the 'Guerriere.' At this moment Captain Dacres said politely to me, 'Captain Orne, as I suppose you do not wish to fight against your own countrymen, you are at liberty to retire below the water-line.' It was not long after this, before I retired from the quarter-deck to the cockpit." It may be well here to supplement Captain Orne's narrative by the statement that Captain Dacres, with a chivalric sense of justice not common in the British navy of that day, allowed ten American sailors who had been impressed into his crew to leave their quarters and go below, that they might not fight against their country. Though an enemy, he was both gallant and generous.

The action was opened by the "Guerriere" with her weather broadside; the shot of which all falling short, she wore around, and let fly her port broadside, sending most of the shot through her enemy's rigging, though two took effect in the hull. In response to this, the "Constitution" yawed a little, and fired two or three of her bow-guns; after which the "Guerriere" again opened with broadsides. In this way the battle continued for about an hour; the American ship saving her fire, and responding to the heavy broadsides with an occasional shot.

During this ineffectual firing, the two ships were continually drawing nearer together, and the gunners on the "Constitution" were becoming more and more restive under their inaction. Captain Hull was pac-



THE "CONSTITUTION" AND THE "GUERRIERE"
(From a print of the time)

ing the quarter-deck with short, quick steps, trying to look cool, but inwardly on fire with excitement. As the shot of the enemy began to take effect, and the impatience of the gunners grew more intense, Lieutenant Morris, the second in command, asked leave to respond with a broadside.

"Not yet," responded Captain Hull with cool decision. Some minutes later, the request was repeated, and met with the same response, while the captain never ceased his pacing of the deck. When within about half pistol-shot, another broadside came from the "*Guerriere*." Then the smothered excitement in Hull's breast broke out.

"Now, boys, pour it into them!" he shouted at the top of his lungs, gesticulating with such violence that the tight breeches of his naval uniform split clear down the side. Lieutenant Morris seconded the captain in cheering on the crew.

"Hull her, boys! Hull her!" he shouted; and the crew, catching up the cry, made the decks ring with shouts of "Hull her!" as they rapidly loaded and let fly again.

The effect of their first broadside was terrific. Deep down in the cockpit of the "*Guerriere*," Captain Orne, who had been listening to the muffled thunder of the cannonade at long range, suddenly "heard a tremendous explosion from the opposing frigate. The effect of her shot seemed to make the '*Guerriere*' reel and tremble, as though she had received the shock of an earthquake. Immediately after this, I heard a tremendous shock on deck, and was told that the mizzen-mast was shot away. In a few moments afterward, the cockpit was filled with wounded men."

Though in his retreat in the cockpit the captive American could hear the roar of the cannon, and see the ghastly effects of the flying missiles, he could form

but a small idea of the fury of the conflict which was raging over his head. Stripped to the waist, and covered with the stains of powder and of blood, the gunners on the two ships pulled fiercely at the gun-tackle, and wielded the rammers with frantic energy; then let fly the death-dealing bolt into the hull of an enemy only a few yards distant. The ships were broadside to broadside, when the Englishman's mizzen-mast was shot away, and fell, throwing the topmen far out into the sea. The force of the great spar falling upon the deck made a great breach in the quarter of the ship; and, while the sailors were clearing away the wreck, the "Constitution" drew slowly ahead, pouring in several destructive broadsides, and then luffed slowly, until she lay right athwart the enemy's bow. While in this position, the long bowsprit of the "Guerriere" stretched far across the quarter-deck of the American ship, and was soon fouled in the mizzen-rigging of the latter vessel. Then the two ships swung helplessly around, so that the bow of the Englishman lay snugly against the port-quarter of the Yankee craft. Instantly, from the deck of each ship rang out the short, sharp blare of the bugle, calling away the boarders, who sprang from their guns, seized their heavy boarding caps and cutlasses, and rushed to the side. But a heavy sea was rolling and tossing the two frigates, so that boarding seemed impossible; and, as Dacres saw the crowd of men ready to receive his boarders, he called them back to the guns. Although each party stuck to its own ship, the fighting was almost hand to hand. Pistols were freely used; and from the tops rained down a ceaseless hail of leaden missiles, one of which wounded Captain Dacres slightly. So near to each other were the combatants, that the commands and the cries of rage and pain could be heard above the deep-toned thunder of

the great guns and the ceaseless rattle of the musketry. The protruding muzzles of the guns often touched the sides of the opposing ship; and when the cannon were drawn in for loading, the sailors on either side thrust muskets and pistols through the ports, and tried to pick off the enemy at his guns.

While the fight was thus raging, a cry of "Fire!" horrified every one on the "Constitution." Flames were seen coming from the windows of the cabin, which lay directly beneath the bow-guns of the "Guerriere." The fire had been set by the flash from the enemy's cannon, so close were the two ships together. By the strenuous exertions of the men on duty in the cabin, the flames were extinguished, and this, the greatest of all dangers, averted. Shortly after, the gun which had caused the trouble was disabled by a skilful shot from one of the Yankee's guns.

While the flames in the cabin were being extinguished, the Americans were making a valiant attempt to board and Lieutenant Morris with his own hands was attempting to lash the two ships together. Abandoning this attempt, he leaped upon the taffrail, and called upon his men to follow him. Lieutenant Bush of the marines, and Mr. Alwyn, were soon at the side of the intrepid officer, when, at a sudden volley of musketry from the British, all three fell back, poor Bush dead, and the two others badly wounded. The ships then drifted asunder; and the "Guerriere's" foremast was shot away, and dragged down the mainmast with it in its fall. The shattered ship now lay a shapeless hulk, tossing on the waves, but still keeping a British ensign defiantly flying from the stump of her fallen mizzen-mast.

The "Constitution" drew away, firing continually, and soon secured a raking position; seeing which, the British hauled down their colors. Lieutenant Read

was sent on board the prize, and, on the appearance of Captain Dacres, said:

"Captain Hull presents his compliments, sir, and wishes to know if you have struck your flag."

Dacres looked significantly at the shattered masts of his ship, and responded drily:

"Well, I don't know. Our mizzen-mast is gone, our main-mast is gone; and I think, on the whole, you may say that we have struck our flag."

After looking about the ship, the boarding officer stepped to the side, to return to his own vessel. Before leaving, he said to Captain Dacres:

"Would you like the assistance of a surgeon, or surgeon's mate, in caring for your wounded?"

Dacres looked surprised, and responded:

"Well, I should suppose you had on board your own ship business enough for all your medical officers."

"Oh, no!" answered Read. "We have only seven wounded, and they have been dressed long ago."

Dacres was astounded, as well he might be; for on the decks of his ship lay twenty-three dead or mortally wounded men, while the surgeons were doing their best to alleviate the sufferings of fifty-six wounded, among whom were several officers. Indeed, the ship looked like a charnel-house. When Captain Orne, freed by the result of the battle, came on deck, he saw a sight that he thus describes: "At about half-past seven o'clock, I went on deck, and there beheld a scene which it would be difficult to describe. All the 'Guerriere's' masts were shot away; and, as she had no sails to steady her, she was rolling like a log in the trough of the sea. Many of the men were employed in throwing the dead overboard. The decks were covered with blood, and had the appearance of a ship's slaughter-house. The gun-tackles were not made fast; and several of the guns got loose, and were



By courtesy of Hon. Theo. Sutro

IRON VERSUS WOOD—SINKING OF THE “CUMBERLAND” BY THE “MERRIMACK”

(In Hampton Roads, March 8, 1862)

Copyright, 1898, by Edward Moran



surging from one side to the other. Some of the petty officers and seamen got liquor, and were intoxicated; and what with the groans of the wounded, the noise and confusion of the enraged survivors on board of the ill-fated ship, rendered the whole scene a perfect hell."

For some time after the "Guerriere" had been formally taken possession of, it seemed as though the "Constitution" would have to fight a second battle, to keep possession of her prize. A strange sail was seen upon the horizon, bearing down upon the "Constitution" in a way that seemed to threaten hostilities. Again the drums beat to quarters, and once again the tired crew went to their stations at the guns. But the strange ship sheered off, and the gallant crew were not forced to fight a second battle. All hands then set to work to remove the prisoners from the "Guerriere," which was evidently in a sinking condition.

In the first boat-load from the sinking ship came Captain Dacres, who was politely shown into Captain Hull's cabin. Unclasping his sword from its place at his hip, the conquered seaman handed it silently to Captain Hull. The victor put it gently back, saying:

"No, no, captain: I'll not take a sword from one who knows so well how to use it. But I will trouble you for that hat."

For a moment a shade of perplexity passed over the brow of the British captain; then he recollected the wager of a year or two before, and all was clear again. Unfortunately, the veracious chronicler who has handed this anecdote down to modern times has failed to state whether the debt was duly paid.

When the ship came up the harbor, she was met and surrounded by a great flotilla of gaily decorated boats; while the flags on the surrounding vessels were

dipped in salutation as the war-scarred veteran made her stately way to the wharf. Here a volunteer artillery company was assembled; and, as the ship came up, they fired a national salute, which was returned from the guns so lately employed in defending the national honor. Quarters had been prepared for Captain Hull in the city; and, as he landed, he found the streets through which he must pass decked with bright bunting, and crowded with people. His progress was accompanied by a great wave of cheers; for, as the people saw him coming, they set up a shout, which was not ended until he had passed from sight. At night came a grand banquet to the officers of the ship, at which six hundred sat down to the feast. The freedom of the city was presented to the captain; and at a later date came the news of sword presentations from citizens of New York, plate from the people of Philadelphia, and gold medals from Congress. Amid all the exultation, the rash arrogance of the British writers was not forgotten; and many a bumper was emptied to the success of the frigate described by British journalists as "a bunch of pine boards under a bit of striped bunting."

CHAPTER X

Three Fierce Naval Duels—"United States" and "Macedonian"—
"Wasp" and "Frolic"—"Constitution" and "Java."

A SECOND notable single ship action followed fast upon Hull's victory over the "Guerriere." In the late fall of 1813 the United States ship "United States," in command of Commodore Stephen Decatur, whom we have read of in connection with the war with Tripoli, was cruising toward the West Indies when she fell in with H. B. M. ship "Macedonian," Captain Carden. The vessels were not unevenly matched, though the "United States" mounted six more guns than her enemy. Indeed, as was so often the case in those days, the two captains had met in friendly chat long before the war, and each expressed himself as certain of victory should their vessels meet in battle. One of the powder-monkeys, named Samuel Leech, of the British ship, told graphically and simply the story of that day's doings on the "Macedonian":

"Sunday (Dec. 25, 1812) came, and it brought with it a stiff breeze," so runs the powder-monkey's tale. "We usually made a sort of holiday of this sacred day. After breakfast it was common to muster the entire crew on the spar-deck, dressed as the fancy of the captain might dictate,—sometimes in blue jackets and white trousers, or blue jackets and blue trousers; at other times in blue jackets, scarlet vests, and blue or white trousers; with our bright anchor-buttons glancing in the sun, and our black, glossy hats ornamented with black ribbons, and the name of our ship painted on them. After muster we frequently had church-service read by the captain; the rest of the day was

devoted to idleness. But we were destined to spend the rest of the Sabbath just introduced to the reader in a very different manner.

"We had scarcely finished breakfast before the man at the masthead shouted 'Sail, ho!'

"The captain rushed upon deck, exclaiming, 'Masthead, there!'

" 'Sir?'

" 'Where away is the sail?'

"The precise answer to this question I do not recollect; but the captain proceeded to ask, 'What does she look like?'

" 'A square-rigged vessel, sir,' was the reply of the lookout.

"After a few minutes, the captain shouted again, 'Masthead, there!'

" 'Sir?'

" 'What does she look like?'

" 'A large ship, sir, standing toward us.'

"By this time, most of the crew were on deck, eagerly straining their eyes to obtain a glimpse of the approaching ship, and murmuring their opinions to each other on her probable character.

"Then came the voice of the captain, shouting, 'Keep silence, fore and aft!'

"Silence being secured, he hailed the lookout, who to his question of 'What does she look like?' replied, 'A large frigate bearing down upon us, sir.'

"A whisper ran along the crew, that the stranger ship was a Yankee frigate. The thought was confirmed by the command of 'All hands clear the ship for action, ahoy!' The drum and fife beat to quarters, bulkheads were knocked away, the guns were released from their confinement, the whole dread paraphernalia of battle was produced; and, after the lapse of a few minutes of hurry and confusion, every man

and boy was at his post ready to do his best service for his country, except the band, who, claiming exemption from the affray, safely stowed themselves away in the cable tier. We had only one sick man on the list; and he, at the cry of battle, hurried from his cot, feeble as he was, to take his post of danger. A few of the junior midshipmen were stationed below on the berth-deck, with orders, given in our hearing, to shoot any man who attempted to move from his quarters.

"As the approaching ship showed American colors, all doubt of her character was at an end. 'We must fight her,' was the conviction of every breast. Every possible arrangement that could insure success was accordingly made. The guns were shotted, the matches lighted; for, although our guns were all furnished with first-class locks, they were also furnished with matches, attached by lanyards, in case the lock should miss fire. A lieutenant then passed through the ship, directing the marines and boarders—who were furnished with pikes, cutlasses, and pistols—how to proceed if it should be necessary to board the enemy. He was followed by the captain, who exhorted the men to fidelity and courage, urging upon their consideration the well-known motto of the brave Nelson, '*England expects every man to do his duty.*' In addition to all these preparations on deck, some men were stationed in the tops with small arms, whose duty it was to attend to trimming the sails, and to use their muskets, provided we came to close action. There were others, also, below, called sail-trimmers, to assist in working the ship, should it be necessary to shift her position during the battle."

In the crew of the "United States" were many young boys, of ages ranging from twelve to fourteen years. At that time many a lad received his warrant as midshipman while still in his tenth year; and young-

sters who wished to join the navy as "ship's boys," were always received, although sometimes their extreme youth made it illegal for their names to be formally enrolled upon the roster of the crew. Such was the station of little Jack Creamer, a ten-year-old boy, who had been serving on the ship for some weeks, although under the age at which he could be legally enlisted. When Jack saw the English frigate looming up in the distance, a troubled look came over his face, and he seemed to be revolving some grave problem in his mind. His comrades noticed his look of care, and rallied him on what they supposed to be his fear of the coming conflict. Jack stoutly denied this charge, but said he was anxious to speak to the captain before going into action. An old quartermaster marched him up to the quarter-deck, and stood waiting for Captain Decatur's attention. In a moment the captain noticed the two, and said cheerily:

"Well, Jack, what's wanting now?"

Touching his hat, the lad replied: "Commodore, will you please to have my name put down on the muster-roll?"

"Why, what for, my lad?"

"So that I can draw my share of the prize-money, when we take that Britisher, sir."

Amused and pleased with the lad's confidence in the success of the "United States" in the coming battle, Decatur gave the necessary order; and Jack went back to his post with a prouder step, for he was now regularly enrolled.

The two ships were now coming within range of each other, and a slow, long-distance cannonade was begun, with but little effect; for a long ground-swell was on, and the ships were rolling in a manner fatal to the aim of the gunners. After half an hour of this playing at long bowls, the Englishman's mizzen

top-mast was shot away; and the cannon-balls from the "States" whizzed through the rigging, and splashed into the water about the "Macedonian," in a way that proved the American gunners had the range, and were utilizing it. Captain Carden soon saw that at long range the American gunners were more than a match for his men, and he resolved to throw prudence to the winds; and, disdaining all manœuvring, bore straight down on the American ship, that lay almost stationary on the water, pouring in rapid and well-aimed broadsides.

Though a gallant and dashing movement, this course led to the defeat of the English ship. The fire of the Americans was deadly in its aim, and marvellous in rapidity. So continuous was the flashing of the discharges from the broadside ports, that the sailors on the "Macedonian" thought their adversary was on fire, and cheered lustily. But the next instant their exultation was turned to sorrow; for a well-directed shot cut away the mizzen-mast, which fell alongside, suspended by the cordage.

"Huzza, Jack!" cried the captain of a gun on the "United States." "We've made a brig of her."

"Ay, ay, my lad," said Decatur, who stood near by; "now aim well at the main-mast, and she'll be a sloop soon."

A few minutes later, the captain shouted to the nearest gunner, "Aim at the yellow streak. Her spars and rigging are going fast enough. She must have a little more hulling."

This order was immediately passed along the gun-deck, until every gunner was striving his utmost to plant his shot in the hull of the enemy. The effect was terrible. The great missiles crashed through the wooden sides of the English frigate, and swept the

decks clear of men. She was coming down on the American bravely, and with manifest intention of boarding; but so skilfully was the "United States" manœuvred, and so accurate and rapid was her fire, that the "Macedonian" was unable to close, and was fairly cut to pieces, while still more than a pistol-shot distant. The "United States," in the meantime, was almost unscathed. The aim of the English gunners was usually too high, and such shots as took effect were mainly in the rigging. After pounding away at the "Macedonian" until the chocks of the fore-castle guns on that ship were cut away, her boats cut to pieces, and her hull shattered with more than one hundred shot-holes, the American ship drew away slightly. The British thought she was in retreat, and cheered lustily, but were soon undeceived; for, after a little manœuvring, the "United States" ranged up under her adversary's lee, securing a raking position. Before a broadside could be fired, the British hauled down their flag; and the action was ended, after just an hour and a half of fighting.

The slaughter on the British frigate had been appalling. From the official accounts, we glean the cold reports of the numbers of the killed and wounded; but for any picture of the scene on the decks of the defeated man-of-war, we must turn to such descriptions as have been left by eye-witnesses. Sailors are not much given to the habit of jotting down the descriptions of the many stirring scenes in which they play parts in their adventurous careers; and much that is romantic, much that is picturesque, and much that is of historic value, has thus been lost to history. But of the details of the action between the "Macedonian" and "United States," the sailor-lad already quoted has left an account, probably as trustworthy as should be expected of a witness in his situation. He was sta-

tioned at one of the guns on the main-deck; and it was his duty, as powder-boy, to run to the magazine for powder for his gun. Before the entrance to the magazine was a heavy wooden screen, pierced with a hole through which the cartridges were passed out to the fleet-footed powder-monkeys, as they rushed up for more powder. Each boy, on getting his cartridge, wrapped it in his jacket, that no stray spark might touch it, and dashed off at full speed for his gun, quickly returning for further supplies.

With the men all standing pale and silent at the guns, the "Macedonian" came on doggedly towards her foe. Three guns fired from the larboard side of the gun-deck opened the action; but the fire was quickly stopped by the gruff order from the quarter-deck, "Cease firing: you are throwing away your shot!" Then came the roar of the opening volley from the American frigate.

"A strange noise such as I had never heard before next arrested my attention," wrote the English sailor-lad. "It sounded like the tearing of sails just over our heads. This I soon ascertained to be the wind of the enemy's shot. The firing, after a few minutes' cessation, recommenced. The roaring of cannon could now be heard from all parts of our trembling ship; and, mingling as it did with that of our foes, it made a most hideous noise. By and by I heard the shot strike the sides of our ship. The whole scene grew indescribably confused and horrible. It was like some awfully tremendous thunderstorm, whose deafening roar is attended by incessant streaks of lightning, carrying death in every flash, and strewing the ground with the victims of its wrath; only in our case the scene was rendered more horrible than that by the presence of torrents of blood, which dyed our decks. Though the recital may be painful, yet, as it will reveal the

horrors of war, and show at what a fearful price the victory is won or lost, I will present the reader with things as they met my eye during the progress of this dreadful fight. I was busily supplying my gun with powder, when I saw blood suddenly fly from the arm of a man stationed at our gun. I saw nothing strike him: the effect alone was visible; and in an instant the third lieutenant tied his handkerchief round the wounded arm, and sent the poor fellow below to the surgeon.

“The cries of the wounded now rang through all parts of the ship. These were carried to the cockpit as fast as they fell, while those more fortunate men who were killed outright were immediately thrown overboard. As I was stationed but a short distance from the main hatchway, I could catch a glance at all who were carried below. A glance was all I could indulge in; for the boys belonging to the guns next to mine were wounded in the early part of the action, and I had to spring with all my might to keep three or four guns supplied with cartridges. I saw two of these lads fall nearly together. One of them was struck in the leg by a large shot; he had to suffer amputation above the wound. The other had a grape or canister sent through his ankle. A stout Yorkshireman lifted him in his arms, and hurried with him to the cockpit. He had his foot cut off, and was thus made lame for life. Two of the boys stationed on the quarter-deck were killed. They were both Portuguese. A man who saw one killed afterwards told me that his powder caught fire, and burnt the flesh almost off his face. In this pitiable situation the agonized boy lifted up both hands, as if imploring relief, when a passing shot instantly cut him in two.”

But the narrative of this young sailor, a boy in years, is almost too horrible for reproduction. He tells of

men struck by three or four missiles at once, and hacked to pieces; of mangled sailors, mortally wounded, but still living, thrown overboard to end their sufferings; of the monotonous drip of the blood on the deck, as desperately wounded men were carried past. The brave seaman who left his bed of sickness for the post of duty had his head carried away by a cannon-ball. The schoolmaster who looked after the education of the midshipmen was killed. Even a poor goat, kept by the officers for her milk, was cut down by a cannon-ball, and, after hobbling piteously about the deck, was mercifully thrown overboard. And this was Sunday, Christmas Day!

The spot amidships where our sailor-lad was stationed must have been the hottest station in the whole ship. Many years later, as Herman Melville, the author of several exciting sea-tales, was walking the deck of a man-of-war with an old negro, "Tawney," who had served on the "Macedonian," the veteran stopped at a point abreast the main-mast. "This part of the ship," said he, "we called the slaughter-house, on board the 'Macedonian.' Here the men fell, five and six at a time. An enemy always directs its shot here, in order to hurl over the mast, if possible. The beams and carlines overhead in the 'Macedonian' slaughter-house were spattered with blood and brains. About the hatchways it looked like a butcher's stall. A shot entering at one of the portholes dashed dead two-thirds of a gun's crew. The captain of the next gun, dropping his lock-string, which he had just pulled, turned over the heap of bodies, to see who they were; when, perceiving an old messmate who had sailed with him in many cruises, he burst into tears, and taking the corpse up in his arms, and going to the side with it, held it over the water a moment, and eyeing it, cried, 'O God! Tom.'

“ ‘ Hang your prayers over that thing! Overboard with it, and down to your gun! ’

“ The order was obeyed, and the heart-stricken sailor returned to his post.”

Amid such scenes of terror, the British tars fought on doggedly, cheering loudly as they worked their guns, but not knowing why they cheered; for the officers, at least, could see how surely the battle was going against them. When the “ United States ” drew away to repair damages, the British officers held a consultation on the quarter-deck. They could not but see that their position was hopeless; and, knowing all further resistance to be folly, the flag was hauled down. To the pride of the officers the surrender was doubtless a severe blow. But Sam Leech remarks pithily, that to him “ it was a pleasing sight; for he had seen fighting enough for one Sabbath,—more, indeed, than he wished to see again on a week-day.”

Decatur at once hailed, to learn the name of his prize, and then sent off a boat with Lieutenant Allen to take possession. He found the decks of the ship in a fearful state. Many of the crew had found liquor, and were drinking heavily. Others were throwing the dead into the sea, carrying the wounded below, and sprinkling the deck with hot vinegar, to remove the stains and odor of blood. The dead numbered forty-three, and sixty-one were wounded. An eye-witness of the terrible spectacle writes of it: “ Fragments of the dead were distributed in every direction, the decks covered with blood,—one continued, agonizing yell of the unhappy wounded. A scene so horrible of my fellow-creatures, I assure you, deprived me very much of the pleasure of victory.” Yet, with all this terrific destruction and loss of life on the “ Macedonian,” the “ United States ” was but little injured; and her loss amounted to but seven killed, and five wounded. In-

deed, so slight was the damage done to the American ship, that an hour's active work by her sailors put her in trim for a second battle.

After the "Macedonian" had been formally taken possession of by Lieutenant Allen, the British officers were removed to the American ship. Some of them were inclined to be very surly over their defeat, and by words and actions showed their contempt for the Americans, whose prisoners they were. In the first boat which went from the prize to the victor was the first lieutenant of the "Macedonian." As he clambered down the side of his vessel, he noticed that his baggage had not been put in the boat which was to bear him to the American frigate. Turning to Lieutenant Allen, he said surlily:

"You do not intend to send me away without my baggage?"

"I hope," responded Allen courteously, "that you do not take us for privateersmen."

"I am sure I don't know by whom I have been taken," was the rude reply, which so angered Allen that he peremptorily ordered the fellow to take his place in the boat, and be silent.

Whatever may have been the demeanor of the British captives, they met with nothing but the most considerate treatment from the American officers. Captain Carden, on his arrival upon the deck of the victorious frigate, was received with the consideration due his rank and the brave defence of his vessel. He was conducted at once to Decatur's cabin, on entering which he took off his sword, and mutely held it out for Decatur's acceptance. Decatur courteously refused to accept it, saying, "Sir, I cannot take the sword of a man who has defended his ship so bravely; but I will take your hand." As long as Carden and his officers remained on the ship, they were treated with the great-

est consideration, and were allowed to retain all their personal property. Every attempt was made to take away from them the bitter remembrance of their defeat. The innate nobility of Decatur's nature is well shown in a letter written to his wife a few days after the action. "One-half of the satisfaction," he says, "arising from this victory is destroyed in seeing the mortification of poor Carden, who deserved success as much as we did who had the good fortune to obtain it." When Carden left the ship, he thanked Decatur for his consideration, and expressed a desire to do likewise by the Americans, should he ever be able to turn the tables.

Amid the heat of battle and the excitement of success, Decatur did not forget little Jack Creamer, the lately enrolled ship's boy. Shortly after the close of the conflict, he sent for Jack to come to his cabin. Soon a much abashed small boy stood before the captain.

"Well, Jack," said the great man, "we did take her, after all."

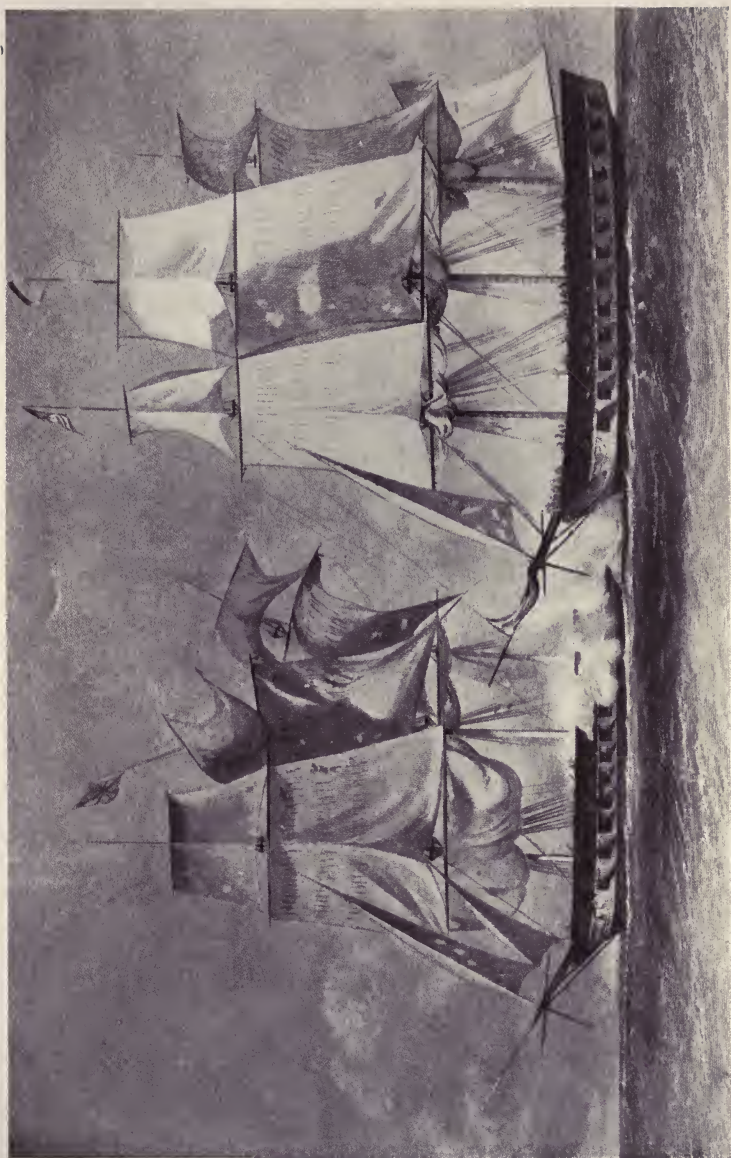
"Yes, your Honor," responded Jack. "I knew we would, before we gave her the first broadside."

"And your share of the prize-money," continued Decatur, "may amount to two hundred dollars, if we get her safe into port. Now, what are you going to do with so much money?"

Jack's eyes had lighted up at the thought of such great wealth.

"Please, sir," he cried, "I'll send half of it to my mother; and the rest will get me a bit of schooling."

"Well said, Jack," said Decatur warmly; and the interview closed for the time. But the captain's interest in the boy was aroused, and for years he showed an almost fatherly regard for the lad. Jack had his "bit of schooling," then received a midshipman's warrant, and for years served Decatur, giving promise of



THE "UNITED STATES" AND "MACEDONIAN"

(From a print of the time)



becoming an able officer. At last, however, his career was ended by the accidental upsetting of a boat when on a pleasure excursion in the Mediterranean.

Leaving now, for a time, the story of the frigate battles, let us look at some of the sharp fights fought by the lesser vessels of the United States navy. A typical action of this character was the victory of the United States sloop-of-war "Wasp" over the "Frolic." The "Wasp" was one of the smallest ships of our navy, but well-built, well-found, and well-manned—a veritable bantam. She carried sixteen thirty-two pounder carronades and two "long twelves." Her commander, Jacob Jones, had served in the war with Tripoli and had been a captive among the Barbarians. It was on a bright fall day in 1812 that the "Wasp" caught sight of a British fleet of six vessels convoyed by a bluff little brig—the man-of-war "Frolic" of a rating equal to that of the American.

It was half-past eleven in the morning when the action began. The day was an ideal October morning at sea,—cool, clear, and a breeze blowing fresh and constantly stiffening. The two vessels were running on the starboard tack, not sixty yards apart. As they ploughed through the waves, great clouds of spray dashed over the bows; and every now and then a wave would sweep over the forecastle, drenching the jackies as they stood at their quarters. As they sped along, the two ships exchanged broadsides, the "Frolic" firing three to the "Wasp's" two. After every broadside, the gunners cheered as they saw the damage done by their fire. When the state of the sea is considered, it seems marvellous that the broadsides should have done any execution whatever. The vessels were rolling terribly, now wallowing in the trough of the sea, and again tossed high on the crest of some enormous wave. At one instant the muzzles of the guns would

be pointed toward the skies, then actually submerged under the waves, from which they rose dripping, to be loaded and fired before another dip should soak the charge. Yet, with all this rolling to spoil their aim, the gunners of both ships pointed their pieces with most destructive effect. Within five minutes from the time of opening fire, the main top-mast of the "Wasp" was shot away, and hung tangled in the rigging, despite the active efforts of the topmen, headed by the nimble midshipmen, to clear away the wreck. This greatly hampered the movements of the American vessel; and when, a few minutes later, the gaff and the main top-gallant mast fell, the chances of the American ship seemed poor, indeed. The effects of the "Wasp's" fire were chiefly to be seen in the hull of her antagonist; but the first twenty minutes of the fight seemed to give the Englishman every chance of victory, since his fire had so cut away the rigging of the "Wasp" that she became unmanageable. It is said that the difference between the execution done by the two batteries was due to the fact that the British fired as their ship was rising on the crest of the wave, while the Americans fired from the trough of the sea, sending their shot into the hull of the enemy.

While the fight was raging, the two ships were constantly drawing nearer together; and just as it seemed as though the destruction wrought in the "Wasp's" rigging would inevitably lead to her defeat, the two vessels fouled. For an instant they lay yard-arm to yard-arm, and at that very moment the American gunners poured in a terrific broadside. So close were the two vessels to each other, that, in loading, the rammers were shoved up against the sides of the "Frolic." Before the gunners of the "Frolic" could respond to this broadside, their ship swung round so that her bow lay against the "Wasp's" quarter; and

her bowsprit passed over the heads of Captain Jones and his officers as they stood on the quarter-deck. That was the moment for a raking volley; and with deadly aim the Americans poured it in, and the heavy iron bolts swept the decks of the "Frolic" from stem to stern.

This turn in the tide of battle fairly crazed with excitement the sailors of the "Wasp." With ringing cheers they applauded the success of the last volley, and, springing into the hammock-nettings, called loudly for their officers to lead them on board the English ship. From the quarter-deck, Captain Jones, with shouts and gestures, strove to hold back the excited men until another broadside could be given the enemy. But the enthusiasm of the sailors was beyond all control. All at once, they saw a sailor from New Jersey, named Jack Lang, spring on a gun, cutlass in hand, ready to board. All were about to follow him, when Captain Jones called him down. Only for a minute did Jack's sense of duty overcome his enthusiasm; and then, remembering that he had once been impressed on the "Frolic," his rage blazed up, and in an instant he was clambering over the nettings, calling for followers. Captain Jones saw that the ardor of his crew was beyond all control, and ordered the bugler to call away the boarders. Headed by their officers, the bold tars swarmed over the nettings, and through the tangled rigging, to the deck of the enemy's ship. Each man clutched his cutlass viciously, for he felt that a desperate conflict was imminent. But when they dropped upon the deck of the "Frolic," a most unexpected spectacle met their eyes.

The broad deck stretched out before them, untenanted save by a few wounded officers near the stern, and a grim old British seaman at the wheel. Instead of the host of armed men with whom the boarders

expected to dispute the possession of the ship, they saw before them only heaps of dead sailors lying about the guns which they had been serving. On the quarter-deck lay Captain Whinyates and Lieutenant Wintle, desperately wounded. All who were unhurt had fled below, to escape the pitiless fire of the American guns, and the unerring aim of the sailors stationed in the "Wasp's" tops. Only the old helmsman stood undaunted at his post, and held the ship on her course, even while the Americans were swarming over the nettings and clambering down the bowsprit. The colors were still flying above the ship; but there was no one left, either to defend them or to haul them down, and they were finally lowered by the hands of Lieutenant Biddle, who led the boarding party.

No action of the war was so sanguinary as this short conflict between two sloops-of-war. The "Frolic" went into action with a crew of one hundred and ten men, fully officered. When the colors were hauled down, only twenty men were uninjured. Every officer was wounded, and of the crew thirty lost their lives. They had stood to their guns with the dogged courage of the English sailor at his best, and had been fairly mowed down by the destructive fire of the Americans. On the "Wasp," the loss of life was slight. The shot of the enemy took effect in the rigging chiefly. The three sailors who were killed were topmen at their posts, and the five wounded were almost all stationed in the rigging.

The Americans were not destined to enjoy their triumph long. Shattered though the "Frolic" was, Lieutenant Biddle, with a prize-crew, took charge of her, and was in hopes of taking her safely to port; but his plan was rudely shattered by the appearance of an English frigate, only a few hours after the action ceased. For the "Frolic" to escape was out of the

question. Both her masts had gone by the board shortly after her flag was struck; and, when the new enemy hove in sight, the prize-crew was working hard to clear from her decks the tangled mass of rigging, wreckage, and dead bodies, that made the tasks of navigation impossible. The ship was rolling like a log, in the trough of the sea, and was an easy prize for an enemy of even less strength than the man-of-war which was then bearing down upon her.

One more fierce naval duel ends the record of the year 1812 upon the ocean. After her famous victory over the "Guerriere" the frigate "Constitution" had put into Boston to refit. When the ship was again ready for sea Captain Hull voluntarily resigned the command, saying that it was fair to give some other commander a chance for glory. The choice fell upon Captain Bainbridge, whose ill-luck in the war with Tripoli has already been noted. But the time had now come to change his fortune. Sailing from Boston with the sloop "Hornet" for a consort he left that vessel blockading in San Salvador harbor the English man-of-war "Bonne Citoyenne," which had half a million pounds sterling in her hold. Three days later the American frigate sighted a British vessel, which made no effort to avoid a conflict, but bore boldly down to the attack. This was the ship "Java," a thirty-eight, and therefore outclassed by the "Constitution," but commanded by a gallant sailor, Captain Lambert, who recked little of odds but audaciously offered battle.

In the light wind that was blowing, the enemy proved the better sailer, and soon forged ahead. His object was to cross the bows of the American ship, and get in a raking broadside,—the end and aim of most of the naval manœuvring in those days of wooden ships and heavy batteries. By skilful seamanship, Bainbridge warded off the danger; and the fight con-

tinued broadside to broadside. The firing on both sides was rapid and well directed. After half an hour of fighting, the "Constitution" was seriously crippled by a round shot, which carried away her wheel, and wounded Bainbridge by driving a small copper bolt deep into his thigh. For a moment it seemed as though the American ship was lost. Having no control over the rudder, her head fell off, her sails flapped idly against the spars, and the enemy was fast coming into an advantageous position. But, though wounded, the indomitable Yankee captain was equal to the occasion. Tackle was rigged upon the rudder-post between decks, and a crew of jackies detailed to work the improvised helm. The helmsmen were far out of ear-shot of the quarter-deck: so a line of midshipmen was formed from the quarter-deck to the spot where the sailors tugged at the steering-lines.

"Hard-a-port!" Bainbridge would shout from his station on the quarter-deck.

"Hard-a-port! Hard-a-port!" came the quick responses, as the midshipmen passed the word along. And so the ship was steered; and, notwithstanding the loss of her wheel, fairly out-manœuvred her antagonist. The first raking broadside was delivered by the "Constitution," and did terrible execution along the gun-deck of the English ship. The two ships then ran before the wind, exchanging broadsides at a distance of half pistol-shot. At this game the American was clearly winning: so the Englishman determined to close and board, in the dashing, fearless way that had made the tars of Great Britain the terror of all maritime peoples. The frigate bore down on the "Constitution," and struck her on the quarter; the long jib-boom tearing its way through the rigging of the American ship. But, while this movement was being executed, the American gunners had not been idle; and

the results of their labors were very evident, in the rigging of the "Java." Her jib-boom and bowsprit were so shattered by shot, that they were on the point of giving way; and, as the ships met, the mizzen-mast fell, crashing through fore-castle and main-deck, crushing officers and sailors beneath it in the fall, and hurling the topmen into the ocean to drown. The "Constitution" shot ahead, but soon wore and lay yard-arm to yard-arm with her foe. For some minutes the battle raged with desperation. A dense sulphurous smoke hung about the hulls of the two ships, making any extended vision impossible. Once in a while a fresher puff of wind, or a change in the position of the ships, would give the jackies a glimpse of their enemy, and show fierce faces glaring from the open ports, as the great guns were drawn in for loading. Then the gray pall of smoke fell, and nothing was to be seen but the carnage near at hand. The officers on the quarter-deck could better judge of the progress of the fray; and, the marines stationed there took advantage of every clear moment to pick off some enemy with a shot from one of their muskets. High up in the tops of the "Constitution" were two small howitzers, with which crews of topmen, under the command of midshipmen, made lively play with grape and canister upon the crowded decks of the enemy. From the cavernous submarine depths of the cockpit and magazine, to the tops of each ship, not an idler was to be found. Chaplains, surgeons, clerks, cooks, and waiters—all were working or fighting for the honor of the flag under which they served.

Again the British determined to board; and the quick, sharp notes of the bugle calling up the boarders gave warning of their intentions. The men in the tops of the American frigate, looking down from their lofty station, could see the crowd of boarders and

marines gathered on the forecastle and in the gangways, and could hear the shrill notes of the boatswain's whistle cheering them on. At that moment, however, the American fire raked the enemy with fearful effect, and the volleys of musketry from the marines and topmen made such havoc among the crowded boarders that the attempt was abandoned. The deadly fire of the Americans was not slackened. Captain Lambert was struck down, mortally wounded; and the command fell upon Lieutenant Chads, who, though himself badly wounded, continued the fight with true British courage. Over the side of the "Java" hung the wreck of her top-hamper, which every broadside set on fire. Yet the British tars fought on, cheering lustily, and not once thinking of surrender, though they saw their fore-mast gone, their mizzen-mast shivered, even the last flag shot away, and the last gun silenced.

When affairs had reached this stage, the "Constitution," seeing no flag flying on the enemy, hauled away, and set about repairing her own damages. While thus engaged, the main-mast of the "Java" was seen to go by the board, and the ship lay a hopeless wreck upon the water. After making some slight repairs, Bainbridge returned to take possession of his prize, but, to his surprise, found a jack still floating over the helpless hulk. It was merely a bit of bravado, however; for, as the "Constitution" ranged up alongside, the jack was hauled down.

The "Java" proved to be a rich prize. She was one of the best of the English frigates, and had just been especially fitted up for the accommodation of the governor-general of Bombay and his staff, all of whom were then on board. This added to the regular number of officers and crew more than one hundred prisoners, mostly of high rank in British military and social circles.

The boarding officer found the ship so badly cut up that to save her was impossible. Her loss in men, including her captain, Henry Lambert, and five midshipmen, was forty-eight, together with one hundred and five wounded, among whom were many officers. The "Constitution" had suffered much less severely, having but twelve killed and twenty wounded. The ship herself was but little damaged; her chief injury being the loss of her wheel, which was immediately replaced by that of the "Java."

Captain Bainbridge now found himself a great distance from home, with a disabled ship filled with prisoners, many of whom were wounded. Even had the wreck of the "Java" been less complete, it would have been hazardous to attempt to take her back to the United States through the West India waters that swarmed with British vessels. No course was open save to take the prisoners aboard the "Constitution," and set the torch to the disabled hulk.

To do this was a work of no little difficulty. The storm of lead and iron that had swept across the decks of the British frigate had left intact not one of the boats that hung from the davits. The "Constitution" had fared better; but, even with her, the case was desperate, for the British cannonade had left her but two serviceable boats. To transfer from the sinking ship to the victorious frigate nearly five hundred men, over a hundred of whom were wounded, was a serious task when the means of transfer were thus limited.

Three days the "Constitution" lay by her defeated enemy, and hour after hour the boats plied between the two ships. The first to be moved were the wounded. Tackle was rigged over the side of the "Java"; and the mangled sufferers, securely lashed in their hammocks, were gently lowered into the waiting boat, and soon found themselves in the sick-bay of the American

ship, where they received the gentlest treatment from those who a few hours before sought only to slay them. The transfer of the wounded once accomplished, the work proceeded with great rapidity: and in the afternoon of the third day the "Constitution" was filled with prisoners; and the "Java," a deserted, shattered hulk, was ready for the last scene in the drama of her career.

The last boat left the desolate wreck, and, reaching the "Constitution," was hauled up to the davits. The side of the American frigate next to the abandoned ship was crowded with men, who looked eagerly across the water. Through the open portholes of the "Java," a flickering gleam could be seen, playing fitfully upon the decks and gun-carriages. The light grew brighter, and sharp-tongued flames licked the outside of the hull, and set the tangled cordage in a blaze. With this the whole ship seemed to burst into fire, and lay tossing, a huge ball of flame, on the rising sea. When the fire was raging most fiercely, there came a terrific explosion, and the great hull was lifted bodily from the water, falling back shattered to countless bits. Guns, anchors, and ironwork dragged the greater part of the wreckage to the bottom; and when the "Constitution," with all sail set, left the spot, the captive Englishmen, looking sadly back, could see only a patch of charred woodwork and cordage floating upon the ocean to mark the burial-place of the sturdy frigate "Java."

The "Constitution" made sail for San Salvador, where the prisoners were landed; first giving their paroles not to serve against the "United States" until regularly exchanged. Bainbridge then took his ship to Boston, where she arrived in February, 1813.

The substitution of the wheel of the "Java" for that of the "Constitution," shot away in battle, has

been alluded to. In his biography of Captain Bainbridge, Fenimore Cooper relates a story of interest regarding this trophy. It was a year or two after peace was made with England, in 1815, that a British naval officer visited the "Constitution," then lying at the Boston navy-yard. The frigate had been newly fitted out for a cruise to the Mediterranean; and an American officer, with some pride, showed the Englishman over the ship, which was then undoubtedly the finest of American naval vessels. After the tour of the ship had been made, the host said, as they stood chatting on the quarter-deck:

"Well, what do you think of her?"

"She is one of the finest frigates, if not the very finest, I ever put my foot aboard of," responded the Englishman; "but, as I must find some fault, I'll just say that your wheel is one of the clumsiest things I ever saw, and is unworthy of the vessel."

The American officer laughed.

"Well, you see," said he, "when the 'Constitution' took the 'Java,' the former's wheel was shot out of her. The 'Java's' wheel was fitted on the victorious frigate, to steer by; and, although we think it as ugly as you do, we keep it as a trophy."

All criticisms on the wheel ended then and there.

The defeat of the "Java" closed the warfare on the ocean during 1812. The year ended with the honors largely in the possession of the United States navy. The British could boast of the capture of but two armed vessels,—the "Nautilus," whose capture by an overwhelming force we have already noted; and the little brig "Vixen," twelve guns, which Sir James Yeo, with the "Southampton," thirty-two, had overhauled and captured in the latter part of November. The capture of the "Wasp" by the "Poitiers," when the American sloop-of-war was cut up by her action

with the "Frolic," was an occurrence, which, however unfortunate for the Americans, reflected no particular honor upon the British arms.

In opposition to this record, the Americans could boast of victory in four hard-fought battles. In no case had they won through any lack of valor on the part of their antagonists; for the Englishmen had not sought to avoid the battle, and had fought with the dogged valor characteristic of their nation. In one or two instances, it is true that the Americans were more powerful than the foe whom they engaged; but, in such cases, the injury inflicted was out of all proportion to the disparity in size of the combatants. The four great actions resulting in the defeat of the "Guerriere," the "Frolic," the "Macedonian," and the "Java," showed conclusively that the American blue-jackets were equal in courage to their British opponents, and far their superiors in coolness, skill, discipline, and self-reliance; and these qualities may be said to have won the laurels for the American navy that were conceded to it by all impartial observers.

CHAPTER XI

The War on the Lakes—Building a Fresh Water Navy—Perry at Put-in-Bay—McDonough on Lake Champlain.

IN these days of peace and industry it is difficult to think of the picturesque hills of Lake Champlain, or the vine-clad shores of Put-in-Bay reverberating to the sound of cannon, and echoing back the cries of infuriated enemies fighting to the death. But the War of 1812 was scarcely declared when operations upon our fresh water seas began. The British held Canada and the magnificent St. Lawrence waterway to the ocean. Lake Champlain and Lake George offered a temptingly direct route to the very middle of New York. The land all about is mountainous and was then densely wooded, making the progress of an invading force by land most difficult. So, too, with Lakes Ontario and Erie. Save for the portage about the Niagara cataract, these lakes afforded a direct water route from the Canadian strongholds to what was then the northwestern frontier of the United States. As a result of these geographical considerations two battles were fought afloat on our inland seas which were perhaps of as much effect in determining the outcome of the war as any battle by sea or land. The name of Commodore Perry is writ large in American history, while that of Commodore McDonough, who won the equally decisive battle on Lake Champlain, deserves to be ranked with it.

When war was declared the English were vastly better equipped for its prosecution than the Americans. On Lake Erie the English flag waved over six men-

of-war with forty-six guns; the United States had but the "Oneida," with sixteen. The British were nearer their base of supplies, with a practically uninterrupted water route to the front, while all American supplies had to be brought by land from the head of navigation on the Hudson. A picturesque incident of the work of thus transporting supplies and ship-building was the carrying of a monster hempen cable, weighing 9,600 pounds, on the shoulders of two hundred men from the last safe point of water carriage through the woods to Sackett's Harbor, where the warships were being pushed to completion. Like a colossal centipede or python the great rope with its bearers wound through the circuitous path, hidden from the British ships that blocked the lake, until after thirty-six hours of toil it was thrown down in the street of Sackett's Harbor amid the sighs of relief of its bearers and the cheers of those who were waiting for it.

Looking back upon the early days of the war, one is perplexed to understand how the British ever permitted the Americans to build a fresh-water navy. They had the force to prevent it, had that force been vigorously used. Perhaps one reason was that the British ships were not officered by practised navy officers, but by merchant captains and militiamen picked up along the Canadian shore. Be that as it may, the only serious attack made on the American naval stations was an attempt to destroy the "Oneida" at Sackett's Harbor. That was on a Sunday morning in July, 1812.

At early dawn of the day mentioned, the lookout reported five ships in the offing, and a few minutes later hailed the deck, to report them to be British ships-of-war. The alarm quickly spread over the little town. Puny though the British fleet would have appeared upon the ocean, it was of ample power to take

the "Oneida" and destroy the village. Before the villagers fairly understood their peril, a small boat came scudding into the harbor before the wind. It bore a message from the British commander, demanding that the "Oneida" and the "Lord Nelson" (a captured Canadian vessel) be surrendered. Should the squadron be resisted, he warned the inhabitants that their town should be burned to the ground.

Commander Woolsey, who commanded the "Oneida," was a United States officer of the regular service, and a man of courage and fertility of resource. Unable to take his vessel out into the lake, he moored her at the entrance of the harbor in such a way that her broadside of nine guns might be brought to bear on the enemy. All hands then set to work getting the other broadside battery ashore; and, by the aid of the villagers, these guns were mounted on a hastily thrown up redoubt on the shore. At the foot of the main street of the village was planted a queerly assorted battery. The great gun, on which the hopes of the Americans centred, was an iron thirty-two-pounder, which had lain for years deeply embedded in the muddy ooze of the lake-shore, gaining thereby the derisive name of the "Old Sow." This redoubtable piece of ordnance was flanked on either side by a brass six-pounder; a pair of cannon that the Yankee sailors had, with infinite pains and indomitable perseverance, dredged up from the sunken hulk of a British war-vessel that had filled a watery grave some years. Two brass nine-pounders completed this novel armament.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning when the British vessels came up within range. Alarm guns had been firing from the shore all the morning; and by that time the village was filled with militiamen, who flocked to the scene of action. Woolsey, who had taken charge of the shore-batteries, ordered a shot from the

thirty-two pounder. The "Old Sow" spoke out bravely, but the shot missing, only roused the enemy to laughter, which could be heard on shore. The British vessels then began a vigorous cannonade, keeping well out of range of the small guns on shore; although so weak were the American defences, that a vigorous onslaught by the enemy would have quickly reduced the town to submission. As it was, a harmless fire was kept up for about two hours. Not a shot took effect, and nothing save the noise and excitement of the cannonading need have deterred the good people of Sackett's Harbor from observing that Sundaay morning in accordance with their usual Sabbath customs. It was reserved for one shot to put an end to this strange engagement. Just as the artillerists who served the iron thirty-two pounder were loading the gun, a cannon-ball struck the ground near the battery. One of the Americans ran, and, picking up the spent ball, brought it into the battery, saying, "I've been playing ball with the redcoats, and have caught them out. Let's see now if they can catch back again." So saying, he rammed the missile down the muzzle of the long thirty-two, and sent it back with deadly aim. The captured ball crashed into the stern of the "Royal George," raked her from stem to stern, killing fourteen men, and wounding eighteen in its course. The marksman, watching the course of his shot, saw the splinters fly from the deck of the British ship; and the Americans cheered loudly for the "Old Sow" as the British squadron put about, and left the Sackett's Harbor people to celebrate their easily won victory.

One other sharp action occurred before Perry's historic victory. Early in the autumn of 1812, Commodore Chauncey, a veteran naval officer, in general command on the Great Lakes, had sent Lieutenant Elliott to Lake Erie, with instructions to begin at once the



COMMODORE PERRY

creation of a fleet by building or purchasing vessels. Elliott chose as the site of his improvised navy-yard Black Rock, a point two miles below Buffalo; and there pushed ahead his work in a way that soon convinced the enemy that, unless the young officer's energy received a check, British supremacy on Lake Erie would soon be at an end. Accordingly two armed brigs, the "Caledonia" and the "Detroit," recently captured by the British, came down to put an end to the Yankee ship-building. Like most of the enemy's vessels on the lakes, these two brigs were manned by Canadians, and had not even the advantage of a regular naval commander.

On the morning of the 8th of October, the sentries on the river-side at Black Rock discovered the two British vessels lying at anchor under the guns of Fort Erie, a British work on the opposite side of the Niagara River, that there flows placidly along, a stream more than a mile wide. Zealous for distinction, and determined to checkmate the enemy in their design, Elliott resolved to undertake the task of cutting out the two vessels from beneath the guns of the British fort. Fortune favored his enterprise. It happened that on that very day a detachment of sailors from the ocean had arrived at Black Rock. Though wearied by their long overland journey, the jackies were ready for the adventure, but had no weapons. In this dilemma Elliott was forced to turn for aid to the military authorities, from whom he obtained pistols, swords, and sabres enough to fit out his sailors for the fray. With the arms came a number of soldiers and a small party of adventurous citizens, all of whom enlisted under the leadership of the adventurous Elliott. In planning the expedition, the great difficulty lay in getting rid of the too numerous volunteers.

By nightfall, the preparations for the expedition

were completed. In the underbrush that hung over the banks of the river, two large boats were concealed, ready for the embarkation. At midnight fifty men, armed to the teeth, silently took their places in each of the great barges, and pushed out upon the black surface of the river. All along the bank were crowds of eager watchers, who discussed the chances of success with bated breath, lest the merest whisper should alarm the British sentries on the farther shore. With steady strokes of the muffled oars, the two boats made their way toward the two brigs that could just be seen outlined against the sky. Elliott, in the first boat, directed the movements of his men, and restrained the too enthusiastic. So stealthy was the approach, that the foremost boat was fairly alongside of the "Detroit" before the British took the alarm. Then the quick hail of the sentry brought an answering pistol-shot from Elliott; and, amid volleys of musketry, the assailants clambered up the sides of the brigs, and with pistol and cutlass drove the startled crew below. So complete was the surprise, that the British made but little resistance; and the cables of the brigs were cut, sails spread, and the vessels under way, before the thunder of a gun from Fort Erie told that the British on shore had taken the alarm.

At the report of the first shot fired, the dark line of the American shore suddenly blazed bright with huge beacon fires, while lanterns and torches were waved from commanding points to guide the adventurous sailors in their navigation of the captured brigs. But the victors were not to escape unscathed with their booty. The noise of the conflict, and the shouts of the Americans on the distant bank of the river, roused the British officers in the fort, and the guns were soon trained on the receding vessels. Some field-batteries galloped along the bank, and soon had their guns in

a position whence they could pour a deadly fire upon the Americans. Nor did the spectators on the New York side of the river escape unharmed; for the first shot fired by the field-battery missed the brigs, but crossed the river and struck down an American officer. Almost unmanageable in the swift current and light wind, the two brigs seemed for a time in danger of recapture. The "Caledonia" was run ashore under the guns of an American battery; but the "Detroit," after being relieved of the prisoners, and deserted by her captors, was beached at a point within range of the enemy's fire. The British made several determined attempts to recapture her, but were beaten off; and, after a day's fighting around the vessel, she was set on fire and burned to the water's edge. The "Caledonia," however, remained to the Americans, and some months later did good service against her former owners.

The decisive battle on the Great Lakes, however, was that fought at Put-in-Bay on Lake Erie, in which the British force was totally destroyed or captured, and British power in that section wholly shattered. The victory was won by a young naval officer altogether unknown to fame and at the outbreak of the war stationed at Newport. It was early in the war that Oliver Hazard Perry wrote to Commodore Chauncey, asking a commission to serve on the lakes. The very request showed the unusual character of the man. Most officers wished to serve on the ocean where were the finest frigates, where captures were many and prize-money generous. With apparently prophetic insight Perry turned to the lakes. Mail travelled but slowly in those days. It was four months before he received an answer from Chauncey. Two months more elapsed before he received orders from the Navy Department. Then in the dead of winter, accompanied only by his

brother, a boy in years, he drove from Newport to Sackett's Harbor in a sleigh, the journey, which now could be made in a night, taking twelve days.

On his arrival, Perry found that the special service for which he was needed was the command of a naval force on Lake Erie. He stopped but a short time at Sackett's Harbor, and then pressed on to Erie, the base of the naval operations on the lake of the same name. It was late in March when Perry arrived; and the signs of spring already showed that soon the lake would be clear of ice, and the struggle for its control recommence. The young lieutenant was indefatigable in the labor of preparation. He urged on the building of vessels already begun. He arranged for the purchase of merchant schooners, and their conversion into gunboats. He went to Pittsburg for supplies, and made a flying trip to Buffalo to join Chauncey in an attack upon Fort George at the mouth of the Niagara River. All the time, he managed to keep up a constant fire of letters to the Secretary of the Navy and to Chauncey, begging for more sailors. By summer-time, he had five vessels ready for service, but no men to man them. The enemy blockaded him, and he dared not accept the challenge. In July he wrote to Chauncey: "The enemy's fleet of six sail are now off the bar of this harbor. What a golden opportunity if we had men! . . . Give me men, sir, and I will acquire both for you and myself honor and glory on this lake, or perish in the attempt." Again he wrote: "For God's sake, and yours and mine, send me men and officers; and I will have them all [the British squadron] in a day or two." When the men finally did arrive, he was much disgusted with their appearance, pronouncing them to be "a motley set,—blacks, soldiers, and boys." Nevertheless, this same motley crew, headed by the critical young officer, won a victory

that effectually crushed the pretensions of the enemy to the control of Lake Erie.

His crews having arrived, Perry was anxious to get out upon the lake, and engage the enemy at once. But this course of action was for a long time impossible. The flotilla lay snugly anchored within the harbor of Erie, the entrance to which was closed by a bar. To cross this bar, the ships would have been obliged to send all heavy ordnance ashore; and, as the enemy kept close watch outside the harbor, the American fleet was practically blockaded. For several weeks the Americans were thus kept prisoners, grumbling mightily at their enforced inaction, and longing for a chance to get at the enemy. One morning in August word was brought to Perry that the blockading fleet had disappeared. Instantly all was life and bustle in the harbor. The crews of all the vessels were ordered aboard; and the flotilla dropped down to the bar, intending to cross early in the morning. At dawn the movement was begun. The schooners and other small craft were easily taken outside; but, when it came to the turn of the two gun-brigs, "Lawrence" and "Niagara," it became evident that mechanical assistance was required. Accordingly, a powerful "camel" was hastily improvised, by the aid of which the two vessels were dragged across the bar. Hardly had the second brig made the passage in safety, when the British fleet appeared in the offing. Tradition says that the opportune absence of the enemy's fleet was caused by a public banquet to which the citizens of Port Dover had invited Commodore Barclay and his officers. While the dinner was going merrily on, the Americans were hard at work, escaping from the trap in which the British had left them. In responding to a toast at the banquet, Barclay said, "I expect to find the Yankee brigs hard and fast on the bar at Erie when I return,

in which predicament it will be but a small job to destroy them." His anticipations were not realized; for, on his arrival, he found the entire squadron safely floating in the deep water outside the bar.

By night Perry's flotilla was in readiness for cruising, and set out immediately in pursuit of the foe. Barclay seemed to avoid the conflict; and, after some weeks' cruising, the Americans cast anchor at Put-in-Bay, and awaited there the appearance of the enemy.

The little flotilla that lay anchored on the placid waters of the picturesque bay consisted of nine vessels, ranging in size from the "Trippe," a puny sloop carrying one gun, to the "Lawrence" and "Niagara," brigs carrying each two long twelves and eighteen short thirty-twos. No very formidable armada was that of a handful of pigmy vessels, commanded by a young officer who had never heard the thunderous cannonade of a naval battle, or seen the decks of his ships stained with the blood of friends and daily companions. Yet the work of the little squadron saved the United States from invasion, won for the young commander a never-dying fame, and clothed the vine-clad hills, the pebbly beaches, and the crystal waters of Put-in-Bay with a wealth of proud, historical associations.

Day after day the vessels lay idly at their anchorage, and the sailors grew restless at the long inactivity. Perry alone was patient; for to him had come the knowledge that the hostile fleet was getting short of supplies, and would soon be starved out of its retreat at Malden. Knowing this, he spared no pains to get his men into training for the coming conflict. They were exercised daily at the great guns, and put through severe drills in the use of the cutlass, in boarding, and repelling boarders. By constant drill and severe discipline, Perry had made of the motley crew sent him a well-drilled body of seamen, every man of whom



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PERRY'S VICTORY—THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE, SEPTEMBER 10, 1813



had become fired with the enthusiasm of his commander.

As the time passed, and the day of battle drew nearer, Perry's confidence in his men increased; and he looked upon the coming conflict as one certain to bring glory to his country. At early dawn the jackies on the ships could see the slender form of their commander perched upon the craggy heights of one of the islands, called to this day "Perry's Lookout," eagerly scanning the horizon in the direction of Malden. On the night of September 9, 1813, the commodore felt convinced that on the next day the British would come out to battle. Accordingly, a conference of captains was called in the cabin of the flagship, and each received directions as to his course of action during the fight. They were urged to force the fighting to close quarters. Said Perry, "Nelson has expressed my idea in the words, 'If you lay your enemy alongside, you cannot be out of your place.'" As the officers were about to depart, Perry drew from a locker a large, square blue flag, on which appeared, in white letters, the dying words of the gallant Lawrence, "DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP." "This," said Perry, "shall be the signal for action; and when it appears at the masthead, remember your instructions." The conference then ended; and the captains returned to their ships across the bay, silvered by the light of the moon, to spend the greater part of the night in preparations for the great danger of the coming day.

Morning dawned bright and clear, with a light breeze blowing, that broke into ripples the surface of the land-locked bay. The rosy light of the rising sun was just reddening the eastern horizon, when, from the lookout in the foretop of the "Lawrence," came the long-drawn hail of "Sail, ho!" quickly repeated from the other vessels.

Perry was already on deck. "What does it look like?" he shouted to the lookout.

"A clump of square-rigged, and fore and afters, sir," was the response.

In a few minutes the signals "Enemy in sight," and "Get under way," were flying from the masthead of the flagship; and the merry piping of the boatswains' whistles, and the measured tramp of the sailors around the capstans, told that signals were observed, and were being obeyed.

The fleet was soon threading its way through the narrow channels, filled with islands, at the entrance to the bay, and finally came into line on the open lake. Not a cloud was in the sky. The lake was calm, with enough wind blowing to admit of manœuvring, yet gentle enough to be of advantage to the schooners that made up the greater part of each fleet.

For some time the Americans held back, manœuvring to get the weather-gauge; but Perry's impatience for the fray got the better of his caution, and he determined to close at once. His first officer remonstrated, saying, "Then you'll have to engage the enemy to leeward."

"I don't care," responded the commodore. "Lee-ward or windward, they shall fight to-day." Then, turning to the quartermaster, he called for the battle-flag, which being brought, he mustered the crew aft, and addressed them briefly, telling them of the task before them, and urging them to fight bravely for the victory. "My brave lads," he concluded, "this flag bears the last words of Captain Lawrence. Shall I hoist it?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" cried the jackies, in unison; and, as the flag was swiftly run to the masthead, the cheers of the sailors on the deck of the "Lawrence" were echoed from the neighboring vessels, as the white let-

ters showed boldly against the blue flag, bearing to each commander the exhortation, "Don't give up the ship!"

The British came on gallantly. Barclay had lost all his diffidence, and brought up his vessels like a veteran. His ships were kept close together; the ship "Detroit" under short sail, that the pigmy sloop "Little Belt" might not be left in the rear. The Americans came down in single file, headed by the schooner "Scorpion." Suddenly through the still air rang out the sharp notes of a bugle-call on the enemy's flagship. It was the signal for action; and, as the last notes died away, the bands struck up "Rule, Britannia." The Americans answered with cheers; and in the midst of the cheering, a jet of smoke and fire spurted from the side of the "Detroit," and a heavy shot splashed into the water near the "Lawrence," while a dull, heavy report came booming over the water.

The battle was opened, but five minutes elapsed before a second shot was fired. When it did come, it crashed through the bulwarks of the "Lawrence," and sped across her deck, doing no great damage. "Steady, lads, steady!" cried Perry, from his post on the quarter-deck, as he saw an uneasy stir among his men, who longed to return the fire. The commodore was determined to fight at close quarters, and hung out signals for each ship to choose its antagonist, and fight the fight out for itself.

It was then high noon, and the battle soon became general. The little schooners "Scorpion" and "Ariel" pluckily kept their place in the van of the American line, but the fire of the enemy fell most fiercely upon the flagship "Lawrence." No less than four vessels at one time were grouped about the "Lawrence," pouring in a destructive fire, and bent upon destroying the flagship and her brave commander; then

taking the smaller vessels in detail. The "Lawrence" fought bravely, but the odds were too great. The carronades with which she was armed were no match for the long guns of her adversaries. For two hours the unequal combat raged, and no American vessel came to the aid of the sorely smitten flagship. Amid the hail of cannon-balls and bullets, Perry seemed to bear a charmed life. He saw his officers and men falling all about him. John Brooks, the lieutenant of marines, fought by the commodore's side. While speaking cheerfully to the commodore, a cannon-ball struck the young lieutenant on the hip, dashing him across the deck against the bulwark, and mutilating him so, that he plead piteously with Perry, imploring that he might be put out of his misery with a pistol-shot. From this awful spectacle Perry turned to speak to the captain of a gun, when the conversation was abruptly cut short by a shot which killed the seaman instantly. Perry returned to the quarter-deck. The first lieutenant came rushing up, his face bloody, and his nose swelled to an enormous size from a splinter which had perforated it. "All the officers in my division are killed," he cried. "For God's sake, give me more!" Perry sent some men to his aid; but they soon fell, and the cry for more men arose again. One of the surgeons who served in the cockpit on that dreadful day states that, in the midst of the roar of battle, Perry's voice was heard calling down the hatchway, and asking any surgeon's mates who could be spared, to come on deck and help work the guns. Several went up; but the appeal was soon repeated, and more responded. When no more men could be obtained, the voice of the commodore took a pleading tone. "Can any of the wounded pull a rope?" said he; and such was his ascendancy over the men, that several poor mangled fellows dragged themselves on deck,

and lent their feeble strength to the working of the guns.

Amid all the carnage, the sailors were quick to notice the lighter incidents of the fray. Even the cockpit, filled with the wounded, and reeking with blood that dripped through the cracks in the deck above, once resounded with laughter as hearty as ever greeted a midddy's after-dinner joke in the steerage. Lieutenant Yarnall received a bad scalp-wound, which fairly drenched his face with blood. As he groped his way towards the cockpit, he passed a lot of hammocks stuffed with "cat-tails" which had been stowed on the bulwarks. The feathery down of the "cat-tails" filled the air, and settled thick upon the head and face of the officer, robbing his countenance of all semblance to a human face. As he descended the ladder to the cockpit, his owl-like air roused the wounded to great shouts of laughter. "The Devil has come among us," they cried.

While talking to his little brother, Perry to his horror saw the lad fall at his feet, dashed to the deck by an unseen missile. The commodore's agony may be imagined; but it was soon assuaged, for the boy was only stunned, and was soon fighting again at his post. The second lieutenant was struck by a spent grape-shot, and fell stunned upon the deck. He lay there for a time, unnoticed. Perry raised him up, telling him he was not hurt, as no blood could be seen. The lieutenant put his hand to his clothing, at the point where the blow had fallen, and discovered the shot lodged in his coat. Coolly putting it in his pocket, he remarked, "You are right: I am not hurt. But this is my shot," and forthwith returned to his duty.

It was a strange-looking body of men that fought at the guns of the "Lawrence." Lean, angular Yankee sailors from the seafaring communities of New

England stood by the side of swarthy negroes, who, with their half-naked black bodies, in the dense powder-smoke, seemed like fiends in pandemonium. In the rigging were stationed a number of Kentucky riflemen, who had volunteered to serve during the battle. The buckskin shirts and leggings gave an air of incongruity to their presence on a man-of-war. Their unerring rifles, however, did brave service for the cause of the Stars and Stripes. At the opening of the action, two tall Indians, decked in all the savage finery of war-paint and feathers, strode the deck proudly. But water is not the Indian's element, and the battle had hardly begun when one fled below in terror; the other remained on deck, and was killed early in the action.

Courageous and self-confident though the American commander was, the moment came when he could no longer disguise the fact that his gallant flagship was doomed to destruction before the continuous and deadly fire of her adversaries. There was but one course of action open, and upon this he determined at once. He would transfer his flag to the "Niagara," and from the deck of that vessel direct the movements of his fleet. Accordingly, the only uninjured boat of the "Lawrence" was lowered; and Perry sprang into the stern, followed by his little brother. Before the boat pushed off, the battle-flag was thrown into her; and, wrapping it about him, Perry took a standing position in the stern, and ordered the oarsmen to give way. He steered straight for the "Niagara," through the very centre of the fight. The enemy quickly grasped the purpose of the movement, and great guns and muskets were trained on the little boat. Shot of all sizes splashed in the water about the boat, splintered the oars, and buried themselves in the gunwale. The crew begged their commander to sit down, and make himself a less conspicuous target for the fire of the

enemy; but Perry paid but little attention to their entreaties. Suddenly the men rested on the oars, and the boat stopped. Angrily the commodore demanded the cause of the stoppage, and was told that the men refused to row unless he sat down. With a smile he yielded, and soon the boat was alongside the "Niagara." Perry sprang to the deck, followed by his boat's crew and a plucky sailor who had swam just behind the boat across the long stretch of water. Hardly a glance did the commodore cast at the ship which he had left, but bent all his faculties to taking the new flagship into the battle.

The "Niagara" was practically a fresh ship; for, up to this time, she had held strangely aloof from the battle. Now all was to be changed. The battle-flag went to her masthead; and she plunged into the thick of the fight, striking thunderous blows at every ship she encountered. As she passed the American lines, the sailors greeted with cheers their gallant commander. The crippled "Lawrence," an almost helpless hulk, left far behind, was forced to strike her flag; although her crew protested loudly, crying out, "Sink the ship, and let us go down with her." But the conquered vessel was not destined to fall into the hands of her enemies. Already the sight of their commodore on a fresh vessel stimulated the American tars; so that in half an hour the British line was broken, their ships cut to pieces, and the "Detroit," their flagship, a prize to the "Niagara." A white handkerchief was waved at the end of a pike by one of the crew of the "Princess Charlotte." The firing stopped, the flag was again run up to the masthead of the "Lawrence," while a few feeble cheers came faintly over the water from the remnant of her crew.

The dense clouds of smoke blowing away, Perry saw, by the disposition of his squadron, that the victory

was secure. Hastily catching off his navy-cap, he laid upon it a sheet of paper torn from an old letter, and wrote to General Harrison the famous dispatch, "*We have met the enemy, and they are ours,—two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop.*"

Then, with true chivalry, he determined that to his flagship "Lawrence," that had so stoutly borne the brunt of battle, should belong the honor of receiving the British captains, when they came to surrender their vessels. He returned to the "Lawrence"; but the scene there was such that even the excitement of victory could raise no feelings of exultation in his breast. He saw on every side the bodies of officers with whom, but the night before, he had dined in perfect health. The decks were red with blood, and from the cockpit arose the groans of the wounded.

After the formal surrender, to make which the officers picked their way over the deck covered with slain to the quarter-deck, the work of burying the dead of both squadrons was begun. It was about sundown that the sad ceremonies were held; and, as the deep tones of the chaplains reading the burial-service arose upon the evening air, the dull, mournful splashing of heavy bodies in the water told that the last scene in the great victory was drawing to an end.

After this glorious victory the war languished on the lakes; indeed, on Lakes Erie and Ontario it was virtually closed, nothing more occurring except a few raids and some futile challenges to battle between Chauncey and Sir James Yeo. But almost a year to a day after the Battle of Put-in-Bay a second victory was won for the American arms on Lake Champlain—a victory which naval authorities agree was no less notable, no less heroic, than that of Perry.

In the northeast corner of New York State, and slightly overlapping the Canada line, lies Lake Cham-



THE "MONITOR" AND "MERRIMAC"
(From a print of the time)

plain,—a picturesque sheet of water, narrow, and dotted with wooded islands. From the northern end of the lake flows the Richelieu River, which follows a straight course through Canada to the St. Lawrence, into which it empties. The long, navigable waterway thus open from Canada to the very heart of New York was to the British a most tempting path for an invading expedition. By the shore of the lake a road wound along; thus smoothing the way for a land force, whose advance might be protected by the fire of the naval force that should proceed up the lake. Naturally, so admirable an international highway early attracted the attention of the military authorities of both belligerents; and, while the British pressed forward their preparations for an invading expedition, the Americans hastened to make such arrangements as should give them control of the lake. Her European wars, however, made so great a demand for soldiers upon Great Britain, that not until 1814 could she send to America a sufficient force to undertake the invasion of the United States from the north. In the spring of that year, a force of from ten thousand to fifteen thousand troops, including several thousand veterans who had served under Wellington, were massed at Montreal; and in May a move was made by the British to get control of the lake, before sending their invading forces into New York. The British naval force already in the Richelieu River, and available for service, consisted of a brig, two sloops, and twelve or fourteen gunboats. The American flotilla included a large corvette, a schooner, a small sloop, and ten gunboats, or galleys, propelled with oars. Seeing that the British were preparing for active hostilities, the Americans began to build, with all possible speed, a large brig; a move which the enemy promptly met by pushing forward with equal energy the construction of a frigate. While

the new vessels were on the stocks, an irregular warfare was carried on by those already in commission. At the opening of the season, the American vessels lay in Otter Creek; and, just as they were ready to leave port, the enemy appeared off the mouth of the creek with a force consisting of the brig "Linnet" and eight or ten galleys. The object of the British was to so obstruct the mouth of the creek that the Americans should be unable to come out. With this end in view, they had brought two sloops laden with stones, which they intended to sink in the narrow channel. But, luckily, the Americans had thrown up earthworks at the mouth of the river; and a party of sailors so worked the guns, that, after much manœuvring, the British were forced to retire without effecting their purpose.

About the middle of August, the Americans launched their new brig, the "Eagle"; and the little squadron put out at once into the lake, under command of Captain Thomas Macdonough. Eight days later, the British got their new ship, the "Confiance," into the water. She possessed one feature new to American naval architecture,—a furnace in which to heat cannonballs.

By this time (September, 1814) the invading column of British veterans, eleven thousand strong, had begun its march into New York along the west shore of the lake. Two thousand Americans only could be gathered to dispute their progress; and these, under the command of Brigadier-General Macomb, were gathered at Plattsburg. To this point, accordingly, Macdonough took his fleet, and awaited the coming of the enemy; knowing that if he could beat back the fleet of the British, their land forces, however powerful, would be forced to cease their advance. The fleet that he commanded consisted of the flagship "Sara-

toga," carrying eight long twenty-four-pounders, six forty-two-pound, and twelve thirty-two-pound carronades; the brig "Eagle," carrying eight long eighteens, and twelve thirty-two-pound carronades; schooner "Ticonderoga," with eight long twelve-pounders, four long eighteen-pounders, and five thirty-two-pound carronades; sloop "Preble," with seven long nines; and ten galleys. The commander who ruled over this fleet was a man still in his twenty-ninth year. The successful battles of the War of 1812 were fought by young officers, and the battle of Lake Champlain was no exception to the rule.

The British force which came into battle with McDonough's fleet was slightly superior. It was headed by the flagship "Confiance," a frigate of the class of the United States ship "Constitution," carrying thirty long twenty-fours, a long twenty-four-pounder on a pivot, and six thirty-two or forty-two-pound carronades. The other vessels were the "Linnet," a brig mounting sixteen long twelves; and the "Chubb" and "Finch" (captured from the Americans under the names of "Growler" and "Eagle"),—sloops carrying respectively ten eighteen-pound carronades and one long six; and six eighteen-pound carronades, four long sixes, and one short eighteen. To these were added twelve gunboats, with varied armaments, but each slightly heavier than the American craft of the same class.

The 11th of September had been chosen by the British for the combined land and water attack upon Plattsburg. With the movements of the land forces, this narrative will not deal. The brunt of the conflict fell upon the naval forces, and it was the success of the Americans upon the water that turned the faces of the British invaders back toward Canada.

The village of Plattsburg stands upon the shore of a broad bay which communicates with Lake Champlain

by an opening a mile and a half wide, bounded upon the north by Cumberland Head, and on the south by Crab Island. In this bay, about two miles from the western shore, Macdonough's fleet lay anchored in double line, stretching north and south. The four large vessels were in the front rank, prepared to meet the brunt of the conflict; while the galleys formed a second line in the rear. The morning of the day of battle dawned clear, with a brisk northeast wind blowing. The British were stirring early, and at daybreak weighed anchor and came down the lake. Across the low-lying isthmus that connected Cumberland Head with the mainland, the Americans could see their adversaries' top-masts as they came down to do battle. At this sight, Macdonough called his officers about him, and, kneeling upon the quarter-deck, besought Divine aid in the conflict so soon to come. When the little group rose from their knees, the leading ship of the enemy was seen swinging round Cumberland Head; and the men went to their quarters to await the fiery trial that all knew was impending.

The position of the American squadron was such that the British were forced to attack "bows on," thus exposing themselves to a raking fire. By means of springs on their cables, the Americans were enabled to keep their broadsides to the enemy, and thus improve, to the fullest, the advantage gained by their position. The British came on gallantly, and were greeted by four shots from the long eighteens of the "Eagle," that had no effect. But, at the sound of the cannon, a young game-cock that was running at large on the "Saratoga" flew upon a gun, flapped his wings, and crowed thrice, with so lusty a note that he was heard far over the waters. The American seamen, thus roused from the painful reverie into which the bravest fall before going into action, cheered lustily, and went

into the fight, encouraged as only sailors could be by the favorable omen.

Soon after the defiant game-cock had thus cast down the gage of battle, Macdonough sighted and fired the first shot from one of the long twenty-four-pounders of the "Saratoga." The heavy ball crashed into the bow of the "Confiance," and cut its way aft, killing and wounding several men, and demolishing the wheel. Nothing daunted, the British flagship came on grandly, making no reply, and seeking only to cast anchor alongside the "Saratoga," and fight it out yard-arm to yard-arm. But the fire of the Americans was such that she could not choose her distance; but after having been badly cut up, with both her port anchors shot away, was forced to anchor at a distance of a quarter of a mile. But her anchor had hardly touched bottom, when she suddenly flashed out a sheet of flames, as her rapid broadsides rung out and her red-hot shot sped over the water toward the American flagship. Her first broadside killed or wounded forty of the Americans; while many more were knocked down by the shock, but sustained no further injury. So great was the carnage, that the hatches were opened, and the dead bodies passed below, that the men might have room to work the guns. Among the slain was Mr. Gamble, the first lieutenant, who was on his knees sighting a gun, when a shot entered the port, split the quoin, drove a great piece of metal against his breast, and stretched him dead upon the deck without breaking his skin. By a singular coincidence, fifteen minutes later a shot from one of the "Saratoga's" guns struck the muzzle of a twenty-four on the "Confiance," and, dismounting it, hurled it against Captain Downie's groin, killing him instantly without breaking the skin; a black mark about the size of a small plate was the sole visible injury.

In the meantime, the smaller vessels had become engaged, and were fighting with no less courage than the flagships. The "Chubb" had early been disabled by a broadside from the "Eagle," and drifted helplessly under the guns of the "Saratoga." After receiving a shot from that vessel, she struck, and was taken possession of by Midshipman Platt, who put off from the flagship in an open boat, boarded the prize, and took her into Plattsburg Bay, near the mouth of the Saranac. More than half her people were killed or wounded during the short time she was in the battle. The "Linnet," in the meantime, had engaged the "Eagle," and poured in her broadsides with such effect that the springs on the cables of the American were cut away, and she could no longer bring her broadsides to bear. Her captain therefore cut his cables, and soon gained a position from which he could bring his guns to bear upon the "Confiance." The "Linnet" thereupon dashed in among the American gunboats, and, driving them off, commenced a raking fire upon the "Saratoga." The "Finch," meanwhile, had ranged gallantly up alongside the "Ticonderoga," but was sent out of the fight by two broadsides from the American. She drifted helplessly before the wind, and soon grounded near Crab Island. On the island was a hospital, and an abandoned battery mounting one six-pound gun. Some of the convalescent patients, seeing the enemy's vessel within range, opened fire upon her from the battery, and soon forced her to haul down her flag. Nearly half her crew were killed or wounded. Almost at the same moment, the United States sloop "Preble" was forced out of the fight by the British gunboats, that pressed so fiercely upon her that she cut her cables and drifted inshore.

The "Ticonderoga" fought a gallant fight throughout. After ridding herself of the "Finch," she had

a number of the British gunboats to contend with; and they pressed forward to the attack with a gallantry that showed them to be conscious of the fact that, if this vessel could be carried, the American line would be turned, and the day won by the English. But the American schooner fought stubbornly. Her gallant commander, Lieutenant Cassin, walked up and down the taffrail, heedless of the grape and musket-balls that whistled past his head, pointing out to the gunners the spot whereon to train the guns, and directing them to load with canister and bags of bullets when the enemy came too near. The gunners of the schooner were terribly hampered in their work by the lack of matches for the guns; for the vessel was new, and the absence of these very essential articles was unnoticed until too late. The guns of one division were fired throughout the fight by Hiram Paulding, a sixteen-year-old-midshipman, who flashed his pistol at the priming of the guns as soon as aim was taken. When no gun was ready for his services, he rammed a ball into his weapon and discharged it at the enemy. The onslaught of the British was spirited and determined. Often they pressed up within a boat-hook's length of the schooner, only to be beaten back by her merciless fire. Sometimes so few were left alive in the galleys that they could hardly man the oars to pull out of the fight. In this way the "Ticonderoga" kept her enemies at bay while the battle was being decided between the "Saratoga" and the "Confiance."

For it was upon the issue of the conflict between these two ships that victory or defeat depended. Each had her ally and satellite. Under the stern of the "Saratoga" lay the "Linnet," pouring in raking broadsides. The "Confiance," in turn, was suffering from the well-directed fire of the "Eagle." The roar of the artillery was unceasing, and dense clouds of gunpowder-

smoke hid the warring ships from the eyes of the eager spectators on shore. The "Confiance" was unfortunate in losing her gallant captain early in the action, while Macdonough was spared to fight his ship to the end. His gallantry and activity, however, led him to expose himself fearlessly; and twice he narrowly escaped death. He worked like a common sailor, loading and firing a favorite twenty-four-pound gun; and once, while on his knees, sighting the piece, a shot from the "Confiance" cut in two the spanker-boom, a great piece of which fell heavily upon the captain's head, stretching him senseless upon the deck. He lay motionless for two or three minutes, and his men mourned him as dead; but suddenly his activity returned, and he leaped to his feet, and was soon again in the thick of the fight. In less than five minutes the cry again arose, that the captain was killed. He had been standing at the breach of his favorite cannon, when a round shot took off the head of the captain of the gun, and dashed it with terrific force into the face of Macdonough, who was driven across the deck, and hurled against the bulwarks. He lay an instant, covered with the blood of the slain man; but, hearing his men cry that he was killed, he rushed among them, to cheer them on with his presence.

And, indeed, at this moment the crew of the "Saratoga" needed the presence of their captain to cheer them on to further exertion. The red-hot shot of the "Confiance" had twice set fire to the American ship. The raking fire from the "Linnet" had dismounted carronades and long guns one by one, until but a single serviceable gun was left in the starboard battery. A too heavy charge dismounted this piece, and threw it down the hatchway, leaving the frigate without a single gun bearing upon the enemy. In such a plight the hearts of the crew might well fail them. But Mac-

donough was ready for the emergency. He still had his port broadside untouched, and he at once set to work to swing the ship round so that this battery could be brought to bear. An anchor was let fall astern, and the whole ship's company hauled in on the hawser, swinging the ship slowly around. It was a dangerous manœuvre; for, as the ship veered round, her stern was presented to the "Linnet," affording an opportunity for raking, which the gunners on that plucky little vessel immediately improved. But patience and hard pulling carried the day; and gradually the heavy frigate was turned sufficiently for the after gun to bear, and a gun's crew was at once called from the hawsers to open fire. One by one the guns swung into position, and soon the whole broadside opened with a roar.

Meanwhile the "Confiance" had attempted the same manœuvre. But her anchors were badly placed; and, though her people worked gallantly, they failed to get the ship round. She bore for some time the effective fire from the "Saratoga's" fresh broadside, but, finding that she could in no way return the fire, struck her flag, two hours and a quarter after the battle commenced. Beyond giving a hasty cheer, the people of the "Saratoga" paid little attention to the surrender of their chief enemy, but instantly turned their guns upon the "Linnet." In this combat the "Eagle" could take no part, and the thunder of her guns died away. Farther down the bay, the "Ticonderoga" had just driven away the last of the British galleys; so that the "Linnet" now alone upheld the cause of the enemy. She was terribly outmatched by her heavier foe, but her gallant Captain Pring kept up a desperate defence. Her masts and rigging were hopelessly shattered; and no course was open to her, save to surrender, or fight a hopeless fight. Captain Pring sent off a lieutenant, in an open boat, to ascertain the condition

of the "Confiance." The officer returned with the report that Captain Downie was killed, and the frigate terribly cut up; and as by this time the water, pouring in the shot-holes in the "Linnet's" hull, had risen a foot above the lower deck, her flag was hauled down, and the battle ended in a decisive triumph for the Americans.

Terrible was the carnage, and many and strange the incidents, of this most stubbornly contested naval battle. All of the prizes were in sinking condition. In the hull of the "Confiance" were a hundred and five shot-holes, while the "Saratoga" was pierced by fifty-five. Not a mast that would bear canvas was left standing in the British fleet; those of the flagship were splintered like bundles of matches, and the sails torn to rags. On most of the enemy's vessels, more than half of the crews were killed or wounded. The loss on the British side probably aggregated three hundred. Midshipman William Lee of the "Confiance" wrote home after the battle, "The havoc on both sides was dreadful. I don't think there are more than five of our men, out of three hundred, but what are killed or wounded. Never was a shower of hail so thick as the shot whistling about our ears. Were you to see my jacket, waistcoat, and trousers, you would be astonished to know how I escaped as I did; for they are literally torn all to rags with shot and splinters. The upper part of my hat was also shot away. There is one of the marines who was in the Trafalgar action with Lord Nelson, who says it was a mere flea-bite in comparison with this."

The Americans, though victorious, had suffered greatly. Their loss amounted to about two hundred men. The "Saratoga" had been cut up beyond the possibility of repair. Her decks were covered with dead and dying. The shot of the enemy wrought ter-

rible havoc in the ranks of the American officers. Lieutenant Stansbury of the "Ticonderoga" suddenly disappeared in the midst of the action; nor could any trace of him be found, until, two days later, his body, cut nearly in two by a round shot, rose from the waters of the lake. Lieutenant Vallette of the "Saratoga" was knocked down by the head of a sailor, sent flying by a cannon-ball. Some minutes later he was standing on a shot-box giving orders, when a shot took the box from beneath his feet, throwing him heavily upon the deck. Mr. Brum, the master, a veteran man-o'-war's man, was struck by a huge splinter, which knocked him down, and actually stripped every rag of clothing from his body. He was thought to be dead, but soon reappeared at his post, with a strip of canvas about his waist, and fought bravely until the end of the action. Some days before the battle, a gentleman of Oswego gave one of the sailors a glazed tarpaulin hat, of the kind then worn by seamen. A week later the sailor reappeared, and, handing him the hat with a semi-circular cut in the crown and brim, made while it was on his head by a cannon-shot, remarked calmly, "Look here, Mr. Sloane, how the damned John Bulls have spoiled my hat!"

The last British flag having been hauled down, an officer was sent to take possession of the "Confiance." In walking along her gun-deck, he accidentally ran against a ratline, by which one of her starboard guns was discharged. At this sound, the British galleys and gunboats, which had been lying quietly with their ensigns down, got out oars and moved off up the lake. The Americans had no vessels fit for pursuing them, and they were allowed to escape. In the afternoon the British officers came to the American flagship to complete the surrender. Macdonough met them courteously; and, on their offering their swords, put

them back, saying, "Gentlemen, your gallant conduct makes you worthy to wear your weapons. Return them to their scabbards." By sundown the surrender was complete, and Macdonough sent off to the Secretary of the Navy a dispatch, saying, "*Sir*,—The Almighty has been pleased to grant us a signal victory on Lake Champlain, in the capture of one frigate, one brig, and two sloops-of-war of the enemy."

Some days later, the captured ships, being beyond repair, were taken to the head of the lake, and scuttled. Some of the guns were found to be still loaded; and, in drawing the charges, one gun was found with a canvas bag containing two round shot rammed home, and wadded, without any powder; another gun contained two cartridges and no shot; and a third had a wad rammed down before the powder, thus effectually preventing the discharge of the piece. The American gunners were not altogether guiltless of carelessness of this sort. Their chief error lay in ramming down so many shot upon the powder that the force of the explosion barely carried the missiles to the enemy. In proof of this, the side of the "*Confiance*" was thickly dotted with round shot, which had struck into, but failed to penetrate, the wood.

The result of this victory was immediate and gratifying. The land forces of the British, thus deprived of their naval auxiliaries, turned about, and retreated to Canada, abandoning forever their projected invasion. New York was thus saved by Macdonough's skill and bravery. Yet the fame he won by his victory was not nearly proportionate to the naval ability he showed, and the service he had rendered to his country. Before the popular adulation of Perry, Macdonough sinks into second place. One historian only gives him the pre-eminence that is undoubtedly his due. Says Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, in his admirable history, "The Naval

War of 1812": "But Macdonough in this battle won a higher fame than any other commander of the war, British or American. He had a decidedly superior force to contend against, and it was solely owing to his foresight and resource that we won the victory. He forced the British to engage at a disadvantage by his excellent choice of position, and he prepared beforehand for every possible contingency. His personal prowess had already been shown at the cost of the rovers of Tripoli, and in this action he helped fight the guns as ably as the best sailor. His skill, seamanship, quick eye, readiness of resource, and indomitable pluck are beyond all praise. Down to the time of the civil war, he is the greatest figure in our naval history. A thoroughly religious man, he was as generous and humane as he was skilful and brave. One of the greatest of our sea captains, he has left a stainless name behind him."

CHAPTER XII

The "Hornet" and "Peacock"—Escape of the "Constellation"—Cruise of the "President"—"Chesapeake" and "Shannon"—"Argus" and "Pelican"—"Enterprise" and "Boxer."

THE year 1813 which saw such a decisive victory for the Americans on Lake Erie won for them no glory on the ocean. The war there languished. Such as it was the honors rested with the British. Their fleets were engaged in blockading ports, or raiding and burning villages. In the few battles between the smaller craft of both belligerents the honors were about even, but in the one frigate duel the American ship was defeated—not disgracefully, but decisively. Before describing the battle between the "Chesapeake" and "Shannon" we may well survey hastily the lesser events of the year—a series of pin-pricks which did much to irritate the American people, but which had little to do with the outcome of the war.

Early in the year the "Hornet" was blockading an English treasure-ship at San Salvador. Chased away from this station by a British seventy-four she soon fell in with an enemy's man-of-war, the brig "Peacock," of a weight of metal about equal to her own, mounting ten guns and carrying a crew of two hundred and ten men.

The "Hornet" was immediately cleared for action; and the two hostile vessels began manœuvring for the weather-gage, as two scientific pugilists spar cautiously for an opening. In this contest of seamanship, Captain Lawrence of the "Hornet" proved the victor; and a little after five o'clock in the afternoon, the two enemies stood for each other upon the wind, the "Hor-

net " having the weather-gage. Not a shot was fired until the enemies were dashing past each other, going in opposite directions. The first broadsides were exchanged at half pistol-shot, with very unequal effects. The shot of the "Hornet" penetrated the hull of her antagonist, doing terrible execution; while the broadside let fly by the "Peacock" whistled through the rigging of the American ship, cutting away the pennant, and killing a topman, who was struck by a round shot, and dashed from his station in the mizzen-top, to fall mangled and lifeless into the sea.

Hardly were the ships clear, when the British captain put his helm hard up,—a manœuvre executed with the intention of securing a raking position. But the plan was balked by the cool seamanship of Captain Lawrence, who quickly followed up the British vessel, and, getting a position on his quarter, poured in so rapid and accurate a fire that the enemy was fain to haul down his colors and confess defeat. The British ensign had hardly touched the deck, when it was run up again, with the union down, as a token of distress. At this sight the Yankee tars, who had been cheering lustily over their quickly won victory, stopped their rejoicings, and set about assistance to the injured Britons with as hearty good-will as they had lately shown in their vigorous cannonade.

With all possible dispatch, a boat was lowered, and Lieutenant Shubrick proceeded on board the prize. He found the "Peacock" a complete wreck. Shortly after the surrender her main-mast had gone by the board, and her hull was fairly honeycombed with shot-holes. Returning to his ship, Shubrick reported the condition of the prize. He was immediately ordered to return to the "Peacock," and make every effort to save her. Accompanied by three boats' crews of American sailors, he again boarded the sinking ship, and bent every

energy to the attempt for her salvation. Bulwarks were cut away, and the heavy guns were rolled out of the gaps thus made, and cast into the sea. Deep down in the hold, and swinging like spiders over the sides of the vessels, sailors tried to stop up with felt-covered blocks of wood the great holes through which the water was pouring. All the time boats were plying between the sinking vessel and the "Hornet," transferring the wounded and the prisoners. Twilight fell before the work was ended, and it became evident to all that the "Peacock" must sink during the night.

In one respect the "Peacock" was a model ship. Among naval men she had long been known as "the yacht," on account of the appearance of exquisite neatness she always presented. Her decks were as white as lime-juice and constant holystoning could keep them. The brass-work about the cabins and the breeches of the guns was dazzling in its brilliancy. White canvas lined the breechings of the carronades. Her decks everywhere showed signs of constant toil in the cause of cleanliness. The result of the battle, however, seemed to indicate that Captain Peakes had erred, in that, while his ship was perfect, his men were bad marksmen, and poorly disciplined. While their shot were harmlessly passing through the rigging of the "Hornet," the Americans were pouring in well-directed broadsides, that killed and wounded thirty-eight men, and ended the action in fifteen minutes. The Americans lost but one man in the fight, though three more went down in the sinking prize.

This American success was offset, however, in the same month by the loss of the brig "Viper," twelve guns, to the British thirty-two "Narcissus."

Meanwhile, the British fleets, now much augmented, were blockading the American coast from New England to Chesapeake Bay. Among the men-of-war they

trapped in port was the "Constellation," one of the three "lucky" ships of the young navy. She was at the opening of the war the favorite ship of the American navy; her exploits in the war with France having endeared her to the American people, and won for her among Frenchmen the name of "the Yankee race-horse." Notwithstanding her reputation for speed, she is said to have been very crank, and had an awkward way of getting on her beam-ends without much provocation. An almost incredible tale is told of her getting "knocked down" by a squall while chasing a French privateer, and, notwithstanding the delay, finally overhauling and capturing the chase.

When war was declared with England, the "Constellation" was so thoroughly dismantled, that some months were occupied in refitting before she was ready to put to sea. In January, 1813, she dropped anchor in Hampton Roads, expecting to set out on an extended cruise the next morning. Had she been a day earlier, her career in the War of 1812 might have added new lustre to her glorious record in the war with France; but the lack of that day condemned her to inglorious inactivity throughout the war: for on that very night a British squadron of line-of-battle ships and frigates dropped anchor a few miles down the bay, and the "Constellation" was fairly trapped.

When, by the gray light of early morning, the lookout on the "Constellation" saw the British fleet lying quietly at their anchorage down the bay, he reported to Captain Stewart; and the latter saw that, for a time, he must be content to remain in port. Stewart's reputation for bravery and devotion to his country leaves no doubt that the prospect of prolonged idleness was most distasteful to him. But he had little time to mourn over his disappointment. The position of the frigate was one of great danger. At any moment she

might be exposed to attack by the hostile fleet. Accordingly, she dropped down abreast of Craney Island, where she was secure from attack by the British vessels, but still open to the assaults of their boats.

To meet this danger, Captain Stewart took the most elaborate precautions. His ship was anchored in the middle of the narrow channel; and on either side were anchored seven gunboats, officered and manned by the men of the frigate. Around the gunboats and frigate extended a vast circle of floating logs, linked together by heavy chains, that no boarders might come alongside the vessels. The great frigate towered high above the surrounding gunboats, her black sides unbroken by an open port; for the gun-deck ports were lashed down, and the guns housed. Not a rope's end was permitted to hang over the side; the stern ladders were removed, and the gangway cleats knocked off. An enemy might as well hope to scale the unbroken front of a massive wall of masonry, as that dark, forbidding hull. From the bulwarks rose on all sides, to the ends of the yards, a huge net made of ratlin stuff, boiled in pitch until it would turn the edge of a cutlass, and further strengthened by nail-rods and small chains. The upper part of the netting was weighted with kentledge, the pigs of iron used for ballast; so that, should the hardy assailants succeed in coming alongside and scaling the side, a few blows of an axe would let fall the heavily weighted nettings, sweeping the boarders into the sea, and covering boats and men with an impenetrable mesh, under which they would be at the mercy of the sailors on the frigate's decks. The carronades and howitzers were loaded with grape; and the officers and men felt that only bravery on their part was essential to the defeat of any force that Great Britain could send against the ship.

Heedless of these formidable preparations for their

reception, the enemy set under way two expeditions for the capture of the "Constellation." In neither case did the antagonists actually come to blows, for the approach of the British was discovered before they came within pistol-shot; and, as their only chance lay in surprising the Americans, they retired without striking a blow. The coming of the first expedition was known upon the "Constellation" the day before it actually set out. A Portuguese merchantman, trying to beat out of the bay, had been stopped by the British, and anchored a few miles below the American frigate. A guard and lookout from the English fleet were stationed on the Portuguese to watch the "Constellation." In an unguarded moment, these men let fall a hint of the movement under way; and an American passenger on the Portuguese vessel quickly carried the news to Captain Stewart, and volunteered to remain and aid in the defence. The next night was dark and drizzly; and the British, to the number of two thousand, set out in boats for the "Constellation." Hardly were they within gun-shot, when two lanterns gleamed from the side of a watchful guard-boat; and the roll of drums and sound of hurrying feet aboard the frigate told that the alarm was given. The assailants thereupon abandoned the adventure, and returned to their ship. The next night they returned, but again retreated discomfited. Several nights later, a third expedition came up. This time the guard-boat was far down the bay; and, seeing the huge procession of boats, the Americans calmly edged in among them, and for some time rowed along, listening to the conversation of the British, who never dreamed that an enemy could be in their midst. Suddenly a sailor, more sharp-eyed than the rest, caught sight of the interlopers; and the cry was raised, "A stranger!" The Americans tugged at their oars, and were soon lost to sight; but, not being pursued, re-

turned, and accompanied their foes up the bay, and even anchored with the flotilla at a point above the "Constellation." The enemy, finding the Americans constantly on the watch, abandoned their designs on the ship, and vowed that Captain Stewart must be a Scotchman, as he could never be caught napping. Some days later, an officer, sent with a flag of truce to the British fleet, vastly chagrined the officers there by repeating their remarks overheard by the guard-boat officers who joined the British flotilla in the dark. These three escapes confirmed the reputation borne by the "Constellation," as a "lucky ship"; and although she remained pent up in port throughout the war, doing nothing for her country, her luck was unquestioned in the minds of the sailors.

Among the frigates that did get to sea was the "President," Captains Rodgers. Her cruise was hardly glorious, but one incident of it is worth the telling:

It was near the last of September that the frigate was flying along before a fresh breeze. Her yards were spread with a cloud of snowy canvas, and the wind sung through the straining cordage a melody sweet to the ears of the sailor homeward bound. Towards evening, a small sail was made out in the distance; and, as time wore on, it was seen that she was rapidly approaching the "President." Rodgers surmised that the stranger might be a British vessel, and determined to lure her within range by strategy. In some way he had obtained knowledge of some of the private signals of the British navy; and in a few minutes from the masthead of the American frigate there fluttered a row of flags which announced her as the British frigate "Sea-Horse." The stranger promptly responded, and was made out to be the schooner "High-flyer," a little craft noted for her sailing qualities.

Unsuspectingly the "Highflyer" came under the stern of the American frigate, and waited for a boat to be sent aboard. Soon the boat came; and one of Rodgers's lieutenants, clad in British uniform, clambered up the side, and was received with due honor. He was the bearer of a message from Commodore Rodgers, requesting that the signal-books of the "Highflyer" be sent on board the fictitious "Sea-Horse" for comparison and revision. This the British captain hastened to do, and soon followed his books to the deck of the frigate, where a lieutenant met him, clothed in full British uniform. A file of marines, dressed in the scarlet coats of the British service, stood on the deck; and the duped Englishman greatly admired the appearance of the frigate, remarking to the officer who escorted him to Rodgers's cabin, that so trim a craft could only be found in His Majesty's service.

On entering the cabin, the English officer greeted Commodore Rodgers with deference, and proceeded at once to tell of naval matters.

"I have here," said he, placing a bundle of papers in the commodore's hands, "a number of dispatches for Admiral Warren, who is on this station. You may not know that one of the principal objects of our squadron cruising here is the capture of the Yankee frigate 'President,' which has been greatly annoying British commerce."

Rodgers was naturally much interested in this statement, and asked the visitor if he knew much about the commander of the "President."

"I hear he is an odd fish," was the response; "and certainly he is devilish hard to catch."

Rodgers started. He had hardly expected so frank an expression of opinion.

"Sir," said he emphatically, "do you know what vessel you are on board of?"

"Why, certainly,—on board of His Majesty's ship 'Sea-Horse.'"

"No, sir, you are mistaken," was the startling response. "You are on board of the United States frigate 'President,' and I am Commodore Rodgers."

The astounded Englishman sprang to his feet, and rushed to the deck. The sight he saw there was still more startling. The quarter-deck was crowded with officers in United States uniform. The scarlet coats of the marines had vanished, and were replaced by Yankee blue. Even as he looked, the British flag came fluttering down, the American ensign went up, and the band struck up "Yankee Doodle."

Nothing was left to the Englishman but to submit; and, with the best grace possible, he surrendered his vessel and himself to the "odd fish" who had so cleverly trapped him.

Three days later, the "President," with her prize, and crowded with prisoners, dropped anchor in the harbor of Newport, after a cruise of one hundred and forty-eight days. In actual results, the cruise was far from satisfactory, for but eleven vessels had been taken. But the service rendered the country by annoying the enemy's merchantmen, and drawing the British war-vessels away in chase, was vast. At one time more than twenty British men-of-war were searching for the roving American frigate; and the seafaring people of the United States were thus greatly benefited by the "President's" prolonged cruise.

But the one great naval event of the year was the duel between the "Chesapeake" and "Shannon," that cost the United States its first frigate lost in the war, and gave the nation its naval maxim, "Don't give up the ship."

The "Chesapeake" was one of the ships caught by the blockade. For four months she had been lying

in harbor at Boston refitting after an exceptionally unlucky cruise. To her command was appointed Captain James Lawrence, the commander of the "Hornet" in her victorious duel with the "Peacock." On reaching his ship, he found affairs in a desperate condition. The sailors who had sailed on the long and unproductive cruise were firmly convinced that the frigate's bad luck was beyond remedy. The term of enlistment of many had expired, and they were daily leaving the ship. Those who remained were sullen, and smarting under fancied ill-treatment in the matter of the prize-money. To get fresh seamen was no easy task. Great fleets of privateers were being fitted out; and sailors generally preferred to sail in these vessels, in which the discipline was light, and the gains usually great. Some sailors from the "Constitution" were induced to join the "Chesapeake"; and these, with the remnant of the frigate's old crew, formed the nucleus of a crew which was filled up with merchant-sailors and foreigners of all nations. Before the lists were fairly filled, the ship put to sea, to give battle to an adversary that proved to be her superior.

The events leading to the action were simple, and succeeded each other hurriedly. The port of Boston was blockaded by two British frigates, the "Tenedos," thirty-eight, and the "Shannon," thirty-eight. The latter vessel was under the command of Captain Philip Bowes Vere Broke, a naval officer of courage, skill, and judgment. His crew was thoroughly disciplined, and his ship a model of efficiency. No officer in the service understood better than he the difference between the discipline of a martinet and the discipline of a prudent and sagacious commander. His ship might not, like the "Peacock," merit the title of "the yacht"; but for active service she was always prepared. James, an English naval historian, turns from his usual occu-

pation of explaining the American naval victories by belittling the British ships, and enormously magnifying the power of the victors, to speak as follows of the "Shannon":

From the day on which he [Capt. Broke] joined her, the 14th of September, 1806, the "Shannon" began to feel the effect of her captain's proficiency as a gunner, and zeal for the service. The laying of the ship's ordnance so that it may be correctly fired in a horizontal direction is justly deemed a most important operation, as upon it depends, in a great measure, the true aim and destructive effect of the shot; this was attended to by Capt. Broke in person. By drafts from other ships, and the usual means to which a British man-of-war is obliged to resort, the "Shannon" got together a crew; and in the course of a year or two, by the paternal care and excellent regulations of Capt. Broke, the ship's company became as pleasant to command as it was dangerous to meet.

Moreover, the historian goes on to relate that the ship's guns were carefully sighted, and her ammunition frequently overhauled. Often a cask would be thrown overboard, and a gun's crew suddenly called to sink it as it bobbed about on the waves astern. Practice with the great guns was of daily occurrence.

Every day for about an hour and a half in the forenoon, when not prevented by chase or the state of the weather, the men were exercised at training the guns; and for the same time in the afternoon in the use of the broad-sword, musket, pike, etc. Twice a week the crew fired at targets, both with great guns and musketry; and Capt. Broke, as an additional stimulus beyond the emulation excited, gave a pound of tobacco to every man that put a shot through the bull's-eye.

Such was the vessel that in June appeared alone off the entrance to Boston Harbor, and by her actions seemed to challenge the "Chesapeake" to give her battle. Indeed, Broke's wish to test the strength of the two vessels was so great, that he sent in, by the hands of an American prisoner, a written challenge, the terms and spirit of which showed the writer to be

a courageous and chivalric officer and gentleman. "As the 'Chesapeake' now appears ready for sea," he wrote, "I request you will do me the honor to meet the 'Shannon' with her, ship to ship, to try the fortunes of our respective flags. To an officer of your character, it requires some apology for proceeding to further particulars. Be assured, sir, it is not from any doubt I can entertain of your wishing to close with my proposal, but merely to provide an answer to any objection which might be made, and very reasonably, upon the chance of our receiving any unfair support." Captain Broke then proceeds to assure Lawrence that the other British ships in the neighborhood would be sent away before the day of combat. To the challenge was appended a careful statement of the strength of the "Shannon," that Lawrence might understand that the ships were fairly matched.

But before this challenge reached Boston, Lawrence had set out to seek the enemy. He had seen the "Shannon" lying off the entrance to the port; and, finding out that she was alone, he knew that her presence was in itself a challenge that he could not honorably ignore. Nor did he desire to avoid the battle thus offered. He had confidence in his crew, his frigate, and himself, and looked for nothing but victory. To the Secretary of the Navy, he wrote: "An English frigate is now in sight from my deck. I have sent a pilot-boat out to reconnoitre; and, should she be alone, I am in hopes to give a good account of her before night. My crew appear to be in fine spirits, and I hope will do their duty."

In truth, however, the condition of this same crew was such that the captain would have been justified in refusing the challenge. An unusual number of foreign sailors were enrolled, among whom was a Portuguese, who, in the ensuing battle, did incalculable injury to

the cause of the "Chesapeake." The crew had never drilled together; many of the sailors came on board only a few hours before the ship sailed out to battle. All the old sailors were sullen over the delay in the payment of the prize-money of their last cruise. Lawrence attempted to allay their discontent by giving them checks for the prize-money; but the sense of injury still lingered in the minds of the men, and they were ill-fitted to do battle for the honor of the flag. Added to this evil was the fact that the first and second lieutenants and two acting lieutenants were away on sick-leave, and the ship was thus left short of officers on the eve of battle.

Regardless of the disadvantages under which he labored, Lawrence weighed anchor on the 1st of June, and started down the harbor. As he approached the ocean, Lawrence mustered his crew aft, and eloquently urged them to fight bravely, and do their duty to the country, which had entered upon this war in defence of seamen and their rights. Three ensigns were run-up; and at the fore was unfurled a broad, white flag, bearing the motto, "FREE TRADE AND SAILORS' RIGHTS." When Lawrence closed his speech, and pointed out the flag floating at the fore, the men cheered and went forward, leaving the captain convinced that he could depend upon their loyalty.

The morning was bright and cool, with a fresh breeze blowing, before which the "Chesapeake" rapidly bore down upon the foe that awaited her. Following cautiously in her track came a number of small craft,—pilot-boats, sloops, fishing-smacks, and pleasure-boats,—that had come down the bay to see the outcome of the battle. Hundreds of people of Boston rode along the coast, in hopes of gaining an outlook from which the progress of the fight might be viewed.

At noon the ship rounded Boston Light, and made

out into the open sea. The "Shannon" went ahead, under easy sail, making up the coast toward Salem. Towards five o'clock the "Chesapeake" luffed up for a moment; while the pilot clambered down the side, and put off in a small boat. A gun was then fired, as a signal that the Americans were ready for action.

The "Shannon" evidently understood the purport of the signal; for she quickly hove to, and troops of agile jackies clambered up her rigging, and began to take in sail. The "Chesapeake" followed suit, and was soon under only top-sails and jib. She then laid her course straight for the enemy.

A ship preparing for action in that day was a scene of hurry and confusion that cannot be equalled in this era of machinery and few guns. At the short, broken, rolling beat of the drums, calling the men to quarters, the hurried rush of hundreds of feet began, as the men came pouring from all parts of the ship to their posts. Some clambered aloft to their stations in the tops; others invaded the sanctity of the quarter-deck and captain's cabin, where several guns are always mounted. But the most stirring scene is on the long gun-deck, where the men gradually fall into their places at the two long rows of great guns that peer through the open ports on either side. All are stripped to the waist; and at many a gun the fair skin of the American sailor gleams white by the side of some swarthy Spaniard, or still darker negro.

All quiet down on reaching their stations; and, five minutes after the drum-beats, no sound is heard, save perhaps the steps of the black boys, taking rations of grog around, that the men may "splice the main brace" before going into the fight.

Thus silently did the "Chesapeake" bear down upon her adversary. There was no long-range firing; for the two commanders were veterans, whose chief desire

was to settle the dispute yard-arm to yard-arm. Gradually the American ship ranged alongside the "Shannon," at a distance of half pistol-shot; and, as her fore-mast came in a line with the "Shannon's" mizen-mast, the latter opened fire with her cabin-guns. For a moment the "Chesapeake" was silent, waiting for her guns to bear; then, with sulphuric flashes and a thunderous roar, she let fly her whole broadside. Then followed a duel with great guns. The two ships, lying side by side, dealt and received staggering blows. The spectators in small boats, who kept a safe distance, and the crowds of eager watchers on the far-off heights of Salem, saw through their spy-glasses the flash of the first broadsides, and the flying splinters that followed the course of the deadly shot. Then a heavy cloud of yellow smoke settled over the warring leviathans, and all further incidents of the battle were shut out from view. Only the top-masts of the ships, with the half-furled sails and the opposing ensigns flying, could be seen above the smoke.

Under this vaporous pall, the fighting was sharp and desperate. The first broadside of the "Shannon" so swept the decks of the American frigate, that, of one hundred and fifty men quartered on the upper deck, not fifty were upon their legs when the terrible rush of the shot was over. The sailors in the tops of the British frigate, looking down upon the decks of their enemy, could see nothing but a cloud of hammocks, splinters, and wreckage of all kinds, driven fiercely across the deck. Both men at the wheel fell dead, but their places were soon filled; while fresh gunners rushed down to work the guns that had been silenced by the enemy's fearful broadside. In a moment the "Chesapeake" responded with spirit, and for some time broadsides were exchanged with inconceivable rapidity. The men encouraged each other with cheers and friendly cries.

They had named the guns of the frigate, and with each telling shot they cheered the iron-throated monster which had hurled the bolt. "Wilful Murder," "Spit-fire," "Revenge," "Bull Dog," "Mad Anthony," "Defiance," "Raging Eagle," and "Viper" were some of the titles borne by the great guns; and well the weapons bore out the names thus bestowed upon them. The gunnery of the Americans was good, their shot doing much damage to the enemy's rigging. But the effect of the "Shannon's" broadsides was such that no men, however brave, could stand before them. They swept the decks, mowing down brave fellows by the score. Officers fell on every side. At a critical moment the two ships fouled, exposing the "Chesapeake" to a raking broadside, which beat in her stern-ports, and drove the gunners from the after-port. At this moment, Lawrence was wounded in the leg, but remained at his post and ordered that the boarders be called up. Unhappily a negro bugler had been detailed for the duty usually performed by drummers; and, at this important moment, he could not be found. Midshipmen and lieutenants ran about the ship, striving to call up the boarders by word of mouth. In the confusion, the bugler was found skulking under the stem of the launch, and so paralyzed by fear that he could only give a feeble blast upon his instrument. In the din and confusion of battle, the oral orders of the officers only perplexed the men; and the moment for boarding was lost. At that very moment, the turning point of the conflict, Captain Lawrence was struck by a musket-ball, and fell mortally wounded to the deck. His officers rushed to his side, and, raising him gently, were carrying him below, when in a firm voice he cried:

"Tell the men to fire faster, and not give up the ship. Fight her till she sinks."

With these words on his lips, he was carried to the ward-room.

At this moment, the upper deck was left without an officer above the rank of midshipman. The men, seeing their captain carried below, fell into a panic, which was increased by the explosion of an arm-chest, into which a hand-grenade, hurled by a sailor lying out on the yard-arm of the "Shannon," had fallen. Seeing that the fire of the Americans had slackened, Captain Broke left his quarter-deck, and, running hastily forward, gained a position on the bow of his ship from which he could look down upon the decks of the "Chesapeake." His practised eye quickly perceived the confusion on the deck of the American frigate; and he instantly ordered that the ships be lashed together, and the boarders called up. An old quartermaster, a veteran in the British navy, set about lashing the ships together, and accomplished his task, although his right arm was actually hacked off by the cutlass of an American sailor. The boarders were slow in coming up, and but twenty men followed Broke as he climbed to the deck of the "Chesapeake." Broke led his men straight for the quarter-deck of the frigate. The Americans offered but little resistance. Not an officer was in sight to guide the men, and the newly enlisted sailors and foreigners fled like sheep before the advance of the boarders.

The British reached the quarter-deck with hardly the loss of a man. Here stood Mr. Livermore, the chaplain of the "Chesapeake," who had cruised long with Lawrence, and bitterly mourned the captain's fate. Determined to avenge the fallen captain, he fired a pistol at Broke's head, but missed him. Broke sprang forward, and dealt a mighty stroke of his keen cutlass at the chaplain's head, who saved himself by taking the blow on his arm. While the boarders were thus

traversing the upper deck, the sailors in the tops of the "Chesapeake" were keeping up a well-directed fire, before which many of the Englishmen fell. But this resistance was not of long duration; for one of the "Shannon's" long nines, loaded with grape, swept clean the "Chesapeake's" tops. With this, the British were in full control of the upper deck.

Up to this time, the Americans on the gun-deck had known nothing of the events occurring on the deck above them. When the news of the British assault spread, Lieutenant Budd called upon the men to follow him, and drive the boarders back to their own ship. A number of the marines (who behaved splendidly throughout the fight) and some twenty veteran sailors were all that responded to the call. Broke had in the meantime summoned the marines of the "Shannon" to his aid; and the British, led by their dashing commander, were pouring in a dense column down the companion-ways to the gun-deck. Budd and his handful of followers attacked them fiercely; and, by the very desperation of the onset, the British were forced back a few paces. Broke threw himself upon the Americans. With his cutlass he cut down the first man who attacked him, and bore down upon the others, dealing deadly blows right and left. His followers came close behind him. The Americans fell on every side, and began to retreat before the overwhelming force of their foes. Up from the ward-room came Lieutenant Ludlow, already suffering from two dangerous wounds. He placed himself beside the younger officer, and the two strove in every way to encourage their men. But Ludlow soon fell, with a gaping wound across his forehead. Budd was cut down, and fell through the hatchway to the deck beneath. The sailors, seeing both officers fall, gave way in confusion; and the ship was in the hands of the British. A few

marines kept up a fire through the hatchway, but soon were silenced.

An English officer, Lieutenant Watts, ran to the halliards to haul down the American flag. But it would seem that the good genius which had watched over that starry banner throughout the war was loath to see it disgraced; for the officer had hardly finished his work, when a grape-shot from his own ship struck him, and he fell dead.

The noise of the battle had by this time died away, and the fresh breezes soon carried off the smoke that enveloped the combatants. It was an awful scene thus exposed to view. On the "Chesapeake" were sixty-one killed, and eighty-five wounded men. On the "Shannon" were thirty-three dead, and fifty wounded. On a cot in the ward-room lay Captain Lawrence, his mortal wound having mercifully rendered him unconscious, so that he knew nothing of the loss of his ship. Broke had been made delirious by the fevered throbbing of the wound he had so long neglected. Everywhere were evidences of carnage and desolation. The British prize-crew took possession of the captured ship, and in a few hours the captor and captive were well on their way toward Halifax.

They reached port on the 7th of June; and the sight of the "Shannon," followed by the "Chesapeake" with the British ensign flying proudly over the Stars and Stripes, stirred the little city to the utmost enthusiasm. As the two ships pursued their stately course up the harbor, the British men-of-war on all sides manned their yards, and fired salutes in honor of the victory. The thunders of the cannon brought the town's-people to the water-side, and their cheers rang out lustily to welcome their conquering countrymen to port.

Captain Lawrence had died the day before; and his

body, wrapped in an American flag, lay on the quarter-deck of his frigate. Three days later, his body, with that of his gallant lieutenant Ludlow, was laid to rest with imposing naval honors, in the churchyard at Halifax. But his country, honoring him even in the day of his defeat, was not content that his body should lie in the soil of an enemy's country. Two months after the battle, an American vessel, the "Henry" of Salem, entered the harbor of Halifax, under cover of a flag of truce, and took on board the bodies of Lawrence and Ludlow. They were conveyed first to Salem and later to New York, where they now lie under a massive monument of sandstone, in a corner of Trinity churchyard. A few feet away, the ceaseless tide of human life rolls on its course up and down Broadway; few of the busy men and women pausing to remember that in the ancient churchyard lies the body of the man whose dying words, "Don't give up the ship," were for years the watchword and motto of the United States navy.

Many of the stirring events of this year of the war took place in the waters of Chesapeake Bay and Hampton Roads—a region that deserves to be classic in American naval annals. There was gathered a powerful British fleet under command of Admiral Cockburn—an able and fearless commander, but one who, because of the heartlessness of his methods, was bitterly hated by the peaceful inhabitants along the shore. The little village of Havre de Grace was burned by his orders, for no intelligible reason, and the banks of the surrounding streams ravaged for miles in every direction. Hampton, a more considerable town, was treated in the same way, though in this instance the necessary severities of war were added to by personal barbarities committed by the British in violation of all the tenets of civilized warfare. Indeed, the atrocities of the

sack of Hampton may fairly be said to stand as the last instance of ferocity shown against non-combatants by a civilized people. All the coast, too, was devastated, and at last the enemy prepared for an assault upon Norfolk—a rich prize could it have been won. On the 20th of June they moved forward to the assault,—three seventy-four-gun ships, one sixty-four, four frigates, two sloops, and three transports. They were opposed by the American forces stationed on Craney Island, which commands the entrance to Norfolk Harbor. Here the Americans had thrown up earthworks, mounting two twenty-four, one eighteen, and four six-pound cannon. To work this battery, one hundred sailors from the “Constellation,” together with fifty marines, had been sent ashore. A large body of militia and a few soldiers of the regular army were also in camp upon the island.

The British set the 22d as the date for the attack; and on the morning of that day, fifteen large boats, filled with sailors, marines, and soldiers to the number of seven hundred, put off from the ships, and dashed toward the batteries. At the same time a larger force tried to move forward by land, but were driven back, to wait until their comrades in the boats should have stormed and silenced the American battery. But that battery was not to be silenced. After checking the advance of the British by land, the Americans waited coolly for the column of boats to come within point-blank range. On they came, bounding over the waves, led by the great barge “Centipede,” fifty feet long, and crowded with men. The blue-jackets in the shore battery stood silently at their guns. Suddenly there arose a cry, “Now, boys, are you ready?” “All ready,” was the response. “Then fire!” And the great guns hurled their loads of lead and iron into the advancing boats. The volley was a fearful one;

but the British still came on doggedly, until the fire of the battery became too terrible to be endured. "The American sailors handled the great guns like rifles," said one of the British officers, speaking of the battle. Before this terrific fire, the advancing column was thrown into confusion. The boats, drifting upon each other, so crowded together that the oarsmen could not make any headway. A huge round shot struck the "Centipede," passing through her diagonally, leaving death and wounds in its track. The shattered craft sunk, and was soon followed by four others. The order for retreat was given; and, leaving their dead and some wounded in the shattered barges that lay in the shallow water, the British fled to their ships. Midshipman Tatnall, who, many years later, served in the Confederate navy, waded out with several sailors, and, seizing the "Centipede," drew her ashore. He found several wounded men in her,—one a Frenchman, with both legs shot away. A small terrier dog lay whimpering in the bow. His master had brought him along for a run on shore, never once thinking of the possibility of the flower of the British navy being beaten back by the Americans.

The New England coast, too, was blockaded, but a little ten-gun brig, the "Argus," managed to slip out, and made a swift run to France, whither she carried Mr. Crawford, of Georgia, who had just been appointed minister to that nation. This duty done, her commander took his ship into the very waters that Paul Jones had ravaged thirty-five years earlier. Prizes were many, but all had to be burned, as there was no port into which they could be sent. But her end came soon in an action not creditable to the American arms. A ship deep-laden with wine had been captured, and the American sailors, besides enjoying the cargo to the full before applying the torch, smuggled

quantities of the liquor on to the "Argus." As luck would have it, the flames attracted the attention of the brig "Pelican," which bore down to investigate.

Day was just breaking, and by the gray morning light the British saw an American cruiser making away from the burning hulk of her last prize. The "Pelican" followed in hot pursuit, and was allowed to come alongside, although the fleet American could easily have left her far astern. But Captain Allen was ready for the conflict; confident of his ship and of his crew, of whose half-intoxicated condition he knew nothing, he felt sure that the coming battle would only add more laurels to the many already won by the "Argus." He had often declared that the "Argus" should never run from any two-master; and now, that the gage of battle was offered, he promptly accepted.

At six o'clock in the morning, the "Pelican" came alongside, and opened the conflict with a broadside from her thirty-two-pound carronades. The "Argus" replied with spirit, and a sharp cannonade began. Four minutes after the battle opened, Captain Allen was struck by a round shot that cut off his left leg near the thigh. His officers rushed to his side, and strove to bear him to his cabin; but he resisted, saying he would stay on deck and fight his ship as long as any life was left him. With his back to a mast, he gave his orders and cheered on his men for a few minutes longer; then, fainting from the terrible gush of blood from his wound, was carried below. To lose their captain so early in the action, was enough to discourage the crew of the "Argus." Yet the officers left on duty were brave and skilful. Twice the vessel was swung into a raking position, but the gunners failed to seize the advantage. "They seemed to be nodding over their guns," said one of the officers afterward. The enemy, however, showed no signs of nodding. His fire was

rapid and well-directed, and his vessel manœuvred in a way that showed a practised seaman in command. At last he secured a position under the stern of the "Argus," and lay there, pouring in destructive broadsides, until the Americans struck their flag,—just forty-seven minutes after the opening of the action. The loss on the "Argus" amounted to six killed and seventeen wounded.

However, American pride was somewhat mollified by the little "Enterprise," one of the lucky ships of the war with Tripoli. In the early part of September, 1813, she was cruising near Penguin Point, when she sighted a brig in shore that had the appearance of a hostile war-vessel. The stranger soon settled all doubts as to her character by firing several guns, seemingly for the purpose of recalling her boats from the shore. Then, setting sail with the rapidity of a man-of-war, she bore down upon the American vessel. The "Enterprise," instead of waiting for the enemy, turned out to sea, under easy sail; and her crew were set to work bringing aft a long gun, and mounting it in the cabin, where one of the stern windows had been chopped away to make a port. This action rather alarmed the sailors, who feared that their commander, Lieutenant Burrows, whose character was unknown to them, intended to avoid the enemy, and was rigging the long gun for a stern-chaser. An impromptu meeting was held upon the forecastle; and, after much whispered consultation, the people appointed a committee to go aft and tell the commander that the lads were burning to engage the enemy, and were confident of whipping her. The committee started bravely to discharge their commission; but their courage failed them before so mighty a potentate as the commander, and they whispered their message to the first lieutenant, who laughed, and sent word forward that Mr. Bur-

rows only wanted to get sea-room, and would soon give the jackies all the fighting they desired.

The Americans now had leisure to examine, through their marine-glasses, the vessel which was so boldly following them to the place of battle. She was a man-of-war brig, flying the British ensign from both mast-heads and at the peak. Her armament consisted of twelve eighteen-pound carronades and two long sixes, as against the fourteen eighteen-pound carronades and two long nines of the "Enterprise." The Englishman carried a crew of sixty-six men, while the quarter-rolls of the American showed a total of one hundred and two. But in the battle which followed the British fought with such desperate bravery as to almost overcome the odds against them.

For some time the two vessels fought shy of each other, manœuvring for a windward position. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, the Americans gained this advantage, and at once shortened sail, and edged down toward the enemy. As the ships drew near, a sailor was seen to climb into the rigging of the Englishman, and nail the colors to the mast, giving the lads of the "Enterprise" a hint as to the character of the reception they might expect. As the vessels came within range, both crews cheered lustily, and continued cheering until within pistol-shot, when the two broadsides were let fly at almost exactly the same moment. With the first fire, both commanders fell. Captain Blyth of the English vessel was almost cut in two by a round shot as he stood on his quarter-deck. He died instantly. Lieutenant Burrows was struck by a canister-shot, which inflicted a mortal wound. He refused to be carried below, and was tenderly laid upon the deck, where he remained during the remainder of the battle, cheering on his men, and crying out that the colors of the "Enterprise" should never be struck.

The conflict was sharp, but short. For ten minutes only the answering broadsides rung out; then the colors of the British ship were hauled down. She proved to be the sloop-of-war "Boxer," and had suffered severely from the broadsides of the "Enterprise." Several shots had taken effect in her hull, her fore-mast was almost shot away, and several guns were dismounted. Three men beside her captain were killed, and seventeen wounded. But she had not suffered these injuries without inflicting some in return. The "Enterprise" was much cut up aloft. Her fore-mast and main-mast had each been pierced by an eighteen-pound ball. Her captain lay upon the deck, gasping in the last agonies of death, but stoutly protesting that he would not be carried below until he received the sword of the commander of the "Boxer." At last this was brought him; and grasping it he cried, "Now I am satisfied. I die contented."

The two shattered brigs were taken into Portland, where the bodies of the two slain commanders were buried with all the honors of war. The "Enterprise" was repaired, and made one more cruise before the close of the war; but the "Boxer" was found to be forever ruined for a vessel of war, and she was sold into the merchant-service. The fact that she was so greatly injured in so short a time led a London paper, in speaking of the battle, to say: "The fact seems to be but too clearly established, that the Americans have some superior mode of firing; and we cannot be too anxiously employed in discovering to what circumstances that superiority is owing."

This battle practically closed the year's naval events upon the ocean. The British privateer "Dart" was captured near Newport by some volunteers from the gunboats stationed at that point. But, with this exception, nothing noteworthy in naval circles occurred dur-

ing the remainder of the year. Looking back over the annals of the naval operations of 1813, it is clear that the Americans were the chief sufferers. They had the victories over the "Peacock," "Boxer," and "Highflyer" to boast of; but they had lost the "Chesapeake," "Argus," and "Viper." More than this, they had suffered their coast to be so sealed up by British blockaders that many of their best vessels were left to lie idle at their docks. The blockade, too, was growing stricter daily, and the outlook for the future seemed gloomy; yet, as it turned out, in 1814 the Americans regained the ground they had lost the year before.

CHAPTER XIII

The Cruise of the "Essex"—A Twelve-Year-Old Captain—War with the Aborigines—A Squadron of Prizes—Trapped in Port—The Loss of the "Essex."

ONE of the most picturesque cruises of the war began in 1812 and ended in 1814. It closed in disaster, in dismal, but not dishonorable defeat. But the story of the cruise forms one of the most inspiring chapters in American naval annals, while the experience and discipline it afforded began the education of a twelve-year-old boy destined to become the foremost naval hero of the United States.

The frigate "Essex," rated at thirty-two guns, but mounting only twenty-six, was in the harbor of New York when war was declared. She formed part of the squadron of Commodore Rodgers, but he, being anxious to get to sea before the dreaded orders laying up all ships in port could be delivered, slipped away leaving her to follow. Her commander was Captain David Porter, father of the Civil War admiral of the same name. Among the midshipmen was a twelve-year-old boy whom the captain had adopted—David Glasgow Farragut, whose name shines bright among those of our naval heroes. In those early days midshipmen were mere boys, but we shall see in the course of this narrative that they did their duty like men.

The early months of the cruise were uneventful. Prizes of peaceful merchantmen were plentiful enough, but the only battle was with a ship so much the American's inferior that no great amount of glory attended success. The "Essex" was curiously disguised as a merchant vessel, when on the 13th of August, a small

British man-of-war bore down on her, gleefully intent upon taking a prize. Porter continued his bit of deception. Instead of the great crowd of agile sailors that spring into the rigging of a man-of-war, at the order to make sail, only a handful, in obedience to Porter's orders, awkwardly set on the "Essex" all the sail she would carry. Two long, heavy cables dragging in the water astern so retarded the ship, that the stranger, coming down gallantly, thought he had fallen in with a lumbering old American merchantman, which was making frantic, but futile, efforts to escape.

Had the British captain been able to look behind the closed ports of the "Essex," he would have formed a very different idea of the character of his chase. He would have seen a roomy gun-deck, glistening with that whiteness seen only on the decks of well-kept men-of-war. Down either side of the deck stretched a row of heavy carronades, each with its crew of gunners grouped about the breech, and each shotted and primed ready for the opening volley. From the magazine amidships, to the gun-deck, reached a line of stewards, waiters, and cooks, ready to pass up cartridges; for on a man-of-war, in action, no one is an idler. Active boys were skurrying about the deck, barefooted, and stripped to the waist. These were the "powder monkeys," whose duty it would be, when the action opened, to take the cartridges from the line of powder-passers and carry it to the guns. On the spar-deck, only a few sailors and officers were visible to the enemy; but under the taffrail lay crouched scores of blue-uniformed jackies, with smooth-faced middies and veteran lieutenants, ready to spring into the rigging at the word of command, or to swarm over the side and board the enemy, should the gunwales of the vessels touch.

All this preparation, however, was unknown to the "Englishman," who came boldly on, doubting nothing that the "Essex" would that day be added to his list of prizes. As he drew nearer, the American sailors could see that their foe was much their inferior in size and armament; and the old tars who had seen service before growled out their dissatisfaction, that the action should be nothing but a scrimmage after all. In a few minutes, the bold Britons gave three ringing cheers, and let fly a broadside at the "Essex." In an instant the ports of the sham merchantman were knocked out; and, with a war-like thunder, the heavy carronades hurled their ponderous missiles against the side of the assailant. The astonished Englishmen replied feebly, but were quickly driven from their posts by the rapidity of the American fire; and, in eight minutes after the action was opened, the British hauled down their flag. The captured ship proved to be the sloop-of-war "Alert," mounting twenty eighteen-pounder carronades. The boarding officer found her badly cut up, and seven feet of water in the hold. The officers were transferred to the "Essex," and the "Alert" taken in tow. Circumstances, however, forced the Americans to part in a very few days.

The chief cause which led to the separation of the two vessels was an incipient mutiny, which was discovered by Midshipman Farragut, and was only averted by the perfect discipline of the American crew. An exercise to which the greatest attention was given was the "fire-drill." When the cry of fire was raised on the ship, every man seized his cutlass and blanket, and went to quarters as though the ship were about to go into action. Captain Porter was accustomed, that his men might be well prepared for any emergency, to raise this cry of fire at all hours of the night; and often he caused a slight smoke to be created in the hold,

further to try the nerves of his men. Shortly after the "Alert" was captured, and while the "Essex" was crowded with prisoners, some of the captives conspired to seize the ship, and carry her to England. One night, as Farragut was sleeping in his hammock, a strange feeling of fear came over him; and he opened his eyes to find the coxswain of the captain's gig of the "Alert" standing over him with a pistol in his hand. The boy knew him to be a prisoner, and, seeing him armed, was convinced that something was wrong. Expecting every moment to be killed, he lay still in his hammock, until the man turned on his heel and walked away. Then Farragut slipped out, and ran to the captain's cabin to report the incident. Porter rushed upon the berth-deck in an instant. "Fire! fire!" shouted he at the top of his voice; and in an instant the crew were at their quarters, in perfect order. The mutineers thought that a bad time for their project, and it was abandoned. The next day the prisoners were sent on board the "Alert," and that vessel sent into St. Johns as a cartel.

After this exploit Porter turned his ship's prow southward. He hoped to meet, off the coast of Brazil, the "Constitution" and the "Hornet," but before his arrival these two ships had fought the battles described in an earlier chapter, and were on their way home with prizes and prisoners. The "Essex" was alone in waters filled with British men-of-war, and far from a friendly port. In those days the captain was his own board of strategy. There was no wireless telegraph to direct from Washington ships three thousand miles away. Thrown upon his own responsibility, master of his own fate, the old-time navy captain developed a decision and self-reliance which conditions deny to those of to-day. Porter met his situation with characteristic boldness. Around the other side of South



ADMIRAL FARRAGUT

America, in the broad Pacific Ocean, were no British men-of-war, but large fleets of British whalers. He at once determined to take the "Essex" on the perilous voyage around Cape Horn and seek prizes in those unguarded waters. The voyage was made with little incident, beyond the capture and disarmament of a Peruvian privateer which, though Peru was at peace with the United States, had been taking and burning American whalers. But more important prizes fell fast into the grasp of the "Essex," so that three months after rounding the Horn, Porter, as he trod the deck of his ship, found himself master of a goodly squadron instead of one stanch frigate. The "Essex," of course, led the list, followed by the "Georgianna," sixteen guns, forty-two men; "Atlantic," six guns, twelve men; "Greenwich," ten guns, fourteen men; "Montezuma," ten guns, two men; "Policy," ten men. Of these the "Georgianna" had already received her armament and authority as a war-vessel; and the "Atlantic" showed such seaworthy qualities that Porter determined to utilize her in the same way.

Shortly after he captured even a larger ship, the "Seringapatam," which he armed with twenty-two guns and made part of his squadron. Other vessels were sent back to the United States, or to neutral ports for sale. One effect of these successes was to put a heavy strain on the officers of the "Essex." Every prize had to be officered and there was only the complement on the "Essex" to draw from, and even boyish midshipmen were put in command of ships. Farragut was one of these, and his description of his experience is worth the telling.

"I was sent as prize-master to the 'Barclay,'" he writes. "This was an important event in my life; and, when it was decided that I was to take the ship to Valparaiso, I felt no little pride at finding myself

in command at twelve years of age. This vessel had been recaptured from a Spanish *guarda costa*. The captain and his mate were on board; and I was to control the men sent from our frigate, while the captain was to navigate the vessel. Captain Porter, having failed to dispose of the prizes as it was understood he intended, gave orders for the 'Essex Junior' and all the prizes to start for Valparaiso. This arrangement caused great dissatisfaction on the part of the captain of the 'Barclay,' a violent-tempered old fellow; and, when the day arrived for our separation from the squadron, he was furious, and very plainly intimated to me that I would 'find myself off New Zealand in the morning,' to which I most decidedly demurred. We were lying still, while the other ships were fast disappearing from view; the 'Commodore' going north, and the 'Essex Junior' with her convoy steering to the south for Valparaiso.

"I considered that my day of trial had arrived (for I was a little afraid of the old fellow, as every one else was). But the time had come for me at least to play the man: so I mustered up courage, and informed the captain that I desired the topsail filled away. He replied that he would shoot any man who dared to touch a rope without his orders; he 'would go his own course, and had no idea of trusting himself with a d—d nutshell'; and then he went below for his pistols. I called my right-hand man of the crew, and told him my situation; I also informed him that I wanted the main topsail filled. He answered with a clear 'Ay, ay, sir!' in a manner which was not to be misunderstood, and my confidence was perfectly restored. From that moment I became master of the vessel, and immediately gave all necessary orders for making sail, notifying the captain not to come on deck with his pistols unless he wished to go overboard; for

I would really have had very little trouble in having such an order obeyed."

By the last of September Porter learned authoritatively that he had captured all of the British whalers in the Pacific save one, and that, furthermore, the British frigate "Phœbe" and the sloops "Raccoon" and "Cherub" had been dispatched to those waters to end his career. This was good news to Porter, who was wearying of taking unarmed ships, but as he had been continually at sea for more than a year he determined to seek a quiet harbor in which to refit. To this end he sought the Marquesas Islands, then a true Pacific tropical paradise, peopled by handsome and gentle natives unspoiled as yet by intercourse with white men. Here in the harbor of Nookahevah, Porter brought his ships to anchor and prepared for a two months' stay. Hardly had the ships cast anchor when the water alongside was fairly alive with canoes and swimming natives. They were not allowed to come on board, but were immensely pleased by some fish-hooks and bits of iron let down to them from the decks of the frigate. Not to be outdone in generosity, the islanders threw up to sailors cocoanuts, fruits, and fish. A boat-crew of jackies that went ashore was surrounded by a smiling, chattering throng of men, women, and children, who cried out incessantly, "*Taya, taya*" (friend, friend), and strove to bargain with them for fruits. They were a handsome, intelligent-looking people; tall, slender, and well-formed, with handsome faces, and complexion little darker than that of a brunette. The men carried white fans, and wore bracelets of human hair, with necklaces of whales' teeth and shells about their necks,—their sole articles of clothing. Both men and women were tattooed; though the women seemed to content themselves with bands about the neck and arms, while the men were elab-

orately decorated from head to foot. Though some carried clubs and lances, they showed no signs of hostility, but bore themselves with that simple air of hospitality and unconscious innocence common to all savage peoples of tropical regions, uncorrupted by association with civilized white men.

It was not long, however, before the discovery was made that however gentle and childlike in their attitude toward the visitors, the natives were warlike among themselves. Three tribes struggled for the mastery of the island, and Porter soon saw that unless he threw his force to the support of one of the tribes all three would unite against him and make his position untenable. Accordingly, the curious spectacle was presented of American tars, ten thousand miles from home, fighting side by side with naked barbarians, armed with spears and war-clubs. Naturally, the Typees, with whom the Americans were allied, were victorious, and with the islanders pacified, the work of refitting went on apace. By the 9th of December the "Essex" and "Essex Junior" were refitted, and stocked with fresh provisions of hogs, cocoanuts, and bananas; the "New Zealander," loaded with oil from the other prizes, was ordered to proceed to New York; while the "Greenwich," "Seringapatam," and "Hammond" were to remain at the islands until the "Essex" should return for them. These arrangements being made, the war-ships made ready to depart. The two war-vessels turned their heads toward Valparaiso, and made the port after an uneventful voyage of fifty-six days. The frigate entered the harbor at once, and cast anchor; while the "Essex Junior" was ordered to cruise about outside, keeping a close watch for the enemy's ships. The friendship of the people of the town seemed as great as during the first visit of the frigate to the port; and a series of entertainments was begun, that cul-

minated in a grand ball upon the "Essex" on the night of the 7th of February, 1814. For that one night the officers of the "Essex Junior" were absolved from their weary duty of patrolling the sea at the mouth of the harbor. The vessel was anchored at a point that commanded a view of the ocean; and her officers, arrayed in the splendor of full dress, betook themselves on board of the frigate. At midnight, after an evening of dancing and gaiety, Lieutenant Downes left the "Essex," and returned to his vessel, which immediately weighed anchor and put to sea. The festivities on the frigate continued a little time longer; and then, the last ladies having been handed down the gangway, and pulled ashore, the work of clearing away the decorations began. While the ship's decks were still strewn with flags and flowers, while the awnings still stretched from stem to stern, and the hundreds of gay lanterns still hung in the rigging, the "Essex Junior" was seen coming into the harbor with a signal flying. The signal quartermaster rushed for his book, and soon announced that the flags read, "Two enemy's ships in sight." At this moment more than half the crew of the "Essex" were on shore; but a signal set at the ship's side recalled the men, and in an hour and a half the ship was ready for action; while the "Essex Junior" cast anchor in a supporting position.

The two strange vessels were the "Cherub" and the "Phœbe," British men-of-war. They rounded into the harbor about eight A.M., and bore down towards the American ships. The "Phœbe," the larger of the two Englishmen, drew close to the "Essex"; and her commander, Captain Hillyar, sprang upon the taffrail, and asked after Captain Porter's health. Porter responded courteously; and, noticing that the "Phœbe" was coming closer than the customs of war-vessels in a neutral port permitted, warned the English-

man to keep his distance, or trouble would result. Hillyar protested that he meant no harm, but nevertheless continued his advance until the two ships were almost fouled. Porter called the boarders to the bow; and they crowded forward, armed to the teeth, and stripped for the fight. The "Phæbe" was in such a position that she lay entirely at the mercy of the "Essex," and could not bring a gun to bear in her own defence. Hillyar, from his position on the taffrail, could see the American boarders ready to spring at the word of command, and the muzzles of the cannon ready to blow the ship out of water. There is little doubt that he was astonished to find the "Essex" so well prepared for the fray, for he had been told that more than half her crew had gone ashore. Relying upon this information, he had probably planned to capture the "Essex" at her moorings, regardless of the neutrality of the port. But he had now brought himself into a dangerous position, and Porter would have been justified in opening fire at once. But the apologies and protestations of the British captain disarmed him, and he unwisely let the "Phæbe" proceed unmolested.

In his journal, Farragut thus describes this incident: "We were all at quarters, and cleared for action, waiting with breathless anxiety for the command from Captain Porter to board, when the English captain appeared, standing on the after-gun, in a pea-jacket, and in plain hearing said:

"'Captain Hillyar's compliments to Captain Porter, and hopes he is well.'

"Porter replied: 'Very well, I thank you. But I hope you will not come too near, for fear some accident might take place which would be disagreeable to you.' And, with a wave of his trumpet, the kedge-anchors went up to our yard-arms, ready to grapple the enemy.

"Captain Hillyar braced back his yards, and remarked to Porter, that, if he did fall aboard him, he begged to assure the captain that it would be entirely accidental.

" 'Well,' said Porter, 'you have no business where you are. If you touch a rope-yarn of this ship, I shall board instantly.' "

Notwithstanding Porter's forbearance, the incident came near leading to a battle, through the action of one of the crew, who had come off from shore with his brain rather hazy from heavy drinking. This man was standing by a gun, with a lighted brand in his hand, ready to fire the piece, when he thought he saw an Englishman grinning at him through one of the open ports of the "Phœbe." Highly enraged, he shouted out, "My fine fellow, I'll soon stop your making faces!" and reached out to fire the gun; when a heavy blow from an officer, who saw the action, stretched him on the deck. Had that gun been fired, nothing could have saved the "Phœbe."

Porter now wished to get rid of some of the prizes with which he was encumbered. He could not burn them in the harbor, and the British ships kept too close a watch upon him to permit his ships to leave the harbor for an hour: so he was forced to wait many days for an opportunity. On the 14th of February the opportunity came; and the "Hector" was towed out to sea, and set a-fire. Two weeks later, the "Phœbe" came alone to the mouth of the harbor, and, after showing her motto-flag, hove to, and fired a gun to windward. This Porter understood to be a challenge, and he at once put out in the "Essex." But the "Phœbe" had no intention of entering a fair and equal fight; for she quickly joined her consort, and the two then chased the "Essex" back to port. Much talk and a vast deal of correspondence grew out of this affair,

which certainly did not redound to the credit of the British.

On the 28th of March the wind blew with such force that the larboard cable of the "Essex" parted; and the ship, drifting before the wind, dragged her starboard cable out to sea. Knowing that the British ships were in waiting outside, Porter lost no time in getting on sail and trying to beat back into the harbor. But, just as the ship was rounding the point, there came up a heavy squall, which carried away the main topmast, throwing several topmen into the sea. In her disabled state the frigate could not regain the harbor; but she ran into a little cove, and anchored within half pistol-shot of the shore. Here she was in neutral waters; and, had Captain Hillyar been a man of his word, the "Essex" would have been safe: for that officer, on being asked by Porter whether he would respect the neutrality of the port, had replied with much feeling, "You have paid so much respect to the neutrality of the port, that I feel bound in honor to respect it." But he very quickly forgot this respect, when he saw his enemy lying crippled and in his power, although in neutral waters.

Hardly had the "Essex" cast anchor, when the two British ships drew near, their actions plainly showing that they intended to attack the crippled frigate. The "Essex" was prepared for action, the guns beat to quarters; and the men went to their places coolly and bravely, though each felt at his heart that he was going into a hopeless fight. The midshipmen had hardly finished calling over the quarter-lists, to see that every man was at his station, when the roar of the cannon from the British ships announced the opening of the action. The "Phœbe" had taken up a position under the stern of the American frigate, and pounded away with her long eighteens; while the "Essex" could

hardly get a gun to bear in return. The "Cherub" tried her fortune on the bow, but was soon driven from that position, and joined her consort. The two kept up a destructive fire, until Porter got three long guns out of the cabin-windows, and drove the enemy away. After repairing damages, the British took up a position just out of range of the "Essex's" carronades, and began a rapid and effective fire from their long eighteens.

Such an action as this was very trying to the crew of the "Essex." The carronades against which Porter had protested when the ship was armed were utterly useless against an enemy who used such cautious tactics. On the deck of the frigate men were falling on every side. One shot entered a port, and killed four men who stood at a gun, taking off the heads of the last two. The crash and roar of the flying shots were incessant. As the guns became crippled for lack of men, the junior officers took a hand in all positions. Farragut writes: "I performed the duty of captain's aid, quarter-gunner, powder-boy, and, in fact, did everything that was required of me. . . . When my services were not required for other purposes, I generally assisted in working a gun; would run and bring powder from the boys, and send them back for more, until the captain wanted me to carry a message; and this continued to occupy me during the action." Once during the action a midshipman came running up to Porter, and reported that a gunner had deserted his post. Porter's reply was to turn to Farragut (the lad was only twelve years old), and say, "Do your duty, sir." The boy seized a pistol, and ran away to find the coward, and shoot him in his tracks. But the gunner had slipped overboard, and made his way to the shore, and so escaped.

After the "Essex" had for some time suffered from

the long-range fire of the enemy, Captain Porter determined to make sail, and try to close with his foes. The rigging had been so badly shot away that the flying jib was the only sail that could be properly set. With this, and with the other sails hanging loose from the yards, the "Essex" ran down upon the British, and made such lively play with her carronades, that the "Cherub" was forced to haul off for repairs, and the tide of war seemed to be setting in favor of the Americans. But, though the gallant blue-jackets fought with desperation, their chances for success were small. The decks were strewn with dead, the cockpit was full, and the enemy's shot were constantly adding to the number of dead and dying. Young Farragut, who had been sent below after some gun-primers, was coming up the ladder, when a man standing at the opening of the hatchway was struck full in the face by a cannon-ball, and fell back, carrying the lad with him. The mutilated body fell upon the boy, who lay for a time unconscious; then, jumping to his feet, ran, covered with blood, to the quarter-deck. Captain Porter saw him, and asked if he was wounded. "I believe not, sir," answered the midshipman. "Then," said the captain, "Where are the primers?" Farragut remembered his errand, and dashed below to execute it. When he emerged the second time, he saw the captain (his adopted father) fall, and running up asked if he was wounded. "I believe not, my son," was the response; "but I felt a blow on the top of my head." He had probably been knocked down by the wind of a passing shot.

But the end of the action was now near. Dreadful havoc had been made in the ranks of both officers and men. The cockpit would hold no more wounded; and the shots were beginning to penetrate its walls, killing the sufferers waiting for the surgeon's knife. Lieuten-

ant McKnight was the only commissioned officer on duty. The ship had been several times on fire, and the magazine was endangered. Finally, the carpenter reported that her bottom was so cut up that she could float but a little while longer. On learning this, Porter gave the order for the colors to be hauled down, which was done. The enemy, however, kept up their deadly fire for ten minutes after the "Essex" had struck.

David Farragut narrates some interesting incidents of the surrender. He was sent by the captain to find and destroy the signal book before the British should come aboard; and, this having been done, he went to the cockpit to look after his friends. Here he found Lieutenant Cornell terribly wounded. When Farragut spoke to him, he said, "O Davy, I fear it's all up with me!" and died soon after. The doctor said, that, had this officer been operated upon an hour before, his life might have been saved; but when the surgeons proposed to drop another man, and attend to him, he replied, "No, no, doctor, none of that. Fair play's a jewel. One man's life is as dear as another's; I would not cheat any poor fellow out of his turn." Surely history nowhere records more noble generosity. Soon after this, when Farragut was standing on the deck, a little negro boy came running up to inquire about his master, Lieutenant Wilmer, who had been knocked over by a shot. On learning his master's fate, he leaped over the taffrail into the sea, and was drowned.

After the "Essex" had been formally surrendered, boats were sent to convey the prisoners to the British ships. In one of these Farragut was carried to the "Phœbe," and there fell into a second battle, in which the victory remained with him. "I was so mortified at our capture that I could not refrain from tears," he

writes. "While in this uncomfortable state, I was aroused by hearing a young reefer call out:

" 'A prize! a prize! Ho, boys, a fine grunter, by Jove.'

"I saw at once that he had under his arm a pet pig belonging to our ship, called 'Murphy.' I claimed the animal as my own.

" 'Ah,' said he, 'but you are a prisoner, and your pig also!'

" 'We always respect private property,' I replied; and, as I had seized hold of 'Murphy,' I determined not to let go unless compelled by superior force.

"This was fun for the oldsters, who immediately sung out:

" 'Go it, my little Yankee. If you can thrash. Shorty you can have your pig.'

" 'Agreed,' cried I.

"A ring was formed in an open space, and at it we went. I soon found that my antagonist's pugilistic education did not come up to mine. In fact, he was no match for me, and was compelled to give up the pig. So I took Master Murphy under my arm, feeling that I had in some degree wiped out the disgrace of the defeat."

When the British ships with their prize returned to the quiet waters of the harbor, and began to take account of damages, it was found that the "Essex" had indeed fought a losing fight. On the "Phœbe," but four men were killed, and seven wounded; on the "Cherub," one killed and three wounded, made up the list of casualties. But on the "Essex" were fifty-eight killed, and sixty-six wounded; while an immense number of men were missing, who may have escaped to the shore or may have sunk beneath the waves. Certain it is some swimmers reached shore, though sorely wounded. One man had rushed on deck

with his clothing all aflame, and swam ashore, though scarcely a square inch could be found on his body which was not burned. Another seaman had sixteen or eighteen scales of iron chipped from the muzzle of his gun driven into his legs, yet he reached the shore in safety.

After some delay, the "Essex Junior" was disarmed; and the prisoners, having given their paroles, were placed on board her, with a letter of safe-conduct from Captain Hillyar to prevent their capture by any British man-of-war in whose path they might fall. But this letter availed them little; for, after an uneventful voyage to the northward, the "Essex Junior" found herself brought to by a shot from the British frigate "Saturn," off Sandy Hook. The boarding-officer took Captain Hillyar's letter to the commander of the "Saturn," who remarked that Hillyar had no authority to make any such agreement, and ordered the "Essex Junior" to remain all night under the lee of the British ship. Captain Porter was highly indignant, and handed his sword to the British officer, saying that he considered himself a prisoner. But the Englishman declined the sword, and was about to return to his ship, when Porter said: "Tell the captain that I am his prisoner, and do not consider myself any longer bound by my contract with Captain Hillyar, which he has violated; and I shall act accordingly." By this Porter meant that he now considered himself absolved from his parole, and free to escape honorably if an opportunity should offer.

Accordingly, at seven o'clock the following morning, a boat was stealthily lowered from the "Essex Junior"; and Porter, descending into it, started for the shore, leaving a message, that, since British officers showed so little regard for each other's honor, he had no desire to trust himself in their hands. The boat

had gone some distance before she was sighted by the lookout on the "Saturn," for the hull of the "Essex Junior" hid her from sight. As soon as the flight was noticed, the frigate made sail in chase, and seemed likely to overhaul the audacious fugitives, when a thick fog set in, under cover of which Porter reached Babylon, L. I., nearly sixty miles distant. In the meantime, the "Essex Junior," finding herself hidden from the frigate by the fog-bank, set sail, and made for the mouth of the harbor. She was running some nine knots an hour when the fog showed signs of lifting; and she came up into the wind, that the suspicion of the British might not be aroused. As it happened, the "Saturn" was close alongside when the fog lifted, and her boat soon came to the American ship. An officer, evidently very irate, bounded upon the deck, and said brusquely:

"You must have been drifting very fast. We have been making nine knots an hour, and yet here you are alongside."

"So it appears," responded the American lieutenant coolly.

"We saw a boat leave you, some time ago," continued the Englishman. "I suppose Captain Porter went in it?"

"Yes. You are quite right."

"And probably more of you will run away, unless I cut away your boats from the davits."

"Perhaps that would be a good plan for you to adopt."

"And I would do it very quickly, if the question rested with me."

"You infernal puppy," shouted the American officer, now thoroughly aroused, "if you have any duty to do, do it; but, if you insult me further, I'll throw you overboard!"

With a few inarticulate sounds, the Englishman stepped into his boat, and was pulled back to the "Saturn," whence soon returned a second boat, bearing an apology for the boarding-officer's rudeness. The boarders then searched all parts of the ship, mustered her crew on the plea that it contained British deserters, and finally released her, after having inflicted every possible humiliation upon her officers. The "Essex Junior" then proceeded to New York, where she was soon joined by Captain Porter. The whole country united in doing honor to the officers, overlooking the defeat which closed their cruise, and regarding only the persistent bravery with which they had upheld the cause of the United States in the far-off waters of the Pacific.

CHAPTER XIV

"Peacock" and "Epervier"—The Disappearance of the "Wasp"—
Bombardment of Stonington—The Capture of Washington—
Fort McHenry—Battle of New Orleans.

THE year 1814 is not glorious in American naval history, for its record in the main was one of disaster. Its story redounds but little to the honor of the British, for their greatest victories, though gallantly won, were marred by violations of the code of civilized warfare that caused even London journals to cry out in protest and rebuke. It would almost seem that Jackson's victory at New Orleans, fought after the treaty of peace had been signed at Ghent, came as a fateful rebuke to Cockburn and his marauders.

First of the notable actions of the war was that of the "Peacock"—new sloop-of-war bearing the name of a British prize—and the "Epervier." Cruising in March off the coast of Florida, the Americans encountered three British merchantmen, with a man-of-war to convoy them. The merchantmen scudded for safety; the sloop-of-war "Epervier," with eighteen guns and one hundred and twenty-eight men, came boldly on to the battle, though much inferior to the "Peacock."

The two ships bore down gallantly upon each other, and at a little after ten in the morning passed, exchanging heavy broadsides. The shot of each took effect in the rigging; but the "Peacock" suffered the more, having her foreyard totally disabled,—an injury that compelled her to run large during the rest of the action, and forego all attempts at manœuvring. The two vessels having passed each other, the "Epervier"

eased off, and returned to the fight, running on a parallel course with the American ship. The interchange of broadsides then became very rapid; but the British marksmanship was poor, and few of their shot took effect. The "Epervier," on the contrary, suffered severely from the American fire, which took effect in her hull, dismounting several guns, and so injuring the brig that a British naval officer, writing of the action some years later, said: "The most disgraceful part of the affair was that our ship was cut to pieces, and the enemy hardly scratched."

The injury aloft which both vessels sustained caused the battle to take on the character of an action at long range. Under such conditions, the victory was assured to the side showing the best gunnery. For a moment only did it seem that the vessels were likely to come to close quarters, and the English captain seized that occasion to call up his boarders. But they refused, saying, "She's too heavy for us." A few minutes later the Englishman hauled down his flag, having lost nine killed or mortally wounded, and fourteen wounded. The Americans had suffered but little; only two men being injured, and these but slightly. The shot of the enemy had passed through the rigging of the "Peacock," while the "Epervier" had been hulled forty-five times.

The "Epervier" proved to be a valuable prize. In her hold specie to the amount of one hundred and eighteen thousand dollars was found; and, when the brig was sold to the United States Government, she brought fifty-five thousand dollars: so that the prize-money won by that action kept the sailors in good humor for many months to come. But, before the prize could be safely carried into an American port, she had a gantlet to run, in which she narrowly escaped capture. After the wreck of battle had been cleared

away, the brig and her captor made for Savannah, but were sighted and chased by two British frigates. The "Peacock," in the hope of drawing away the pursuers, left her prize, and headed out to sea. One frigate only followed her, and the other pressed on hotly after the "Epervier," which, to avoid capture, was forced to run into shallow water, whither the heavy frigate could not follow her. But she was not to escape so easily; for the boats of the frigate were lowered, filled with armed men, and set out in pursuit of the brig, which moved but slowly before the light breeze then blowing. The boats soon overhauled the fugitive, and escape seemed hopeless; for the "Epervier" was manned by a prize-crew of only sixteen men. But Lieutenant Nicholson, who was in command, determined to try the effect of bluster. Accordingly he leaped upon the taffrail, with a speaking-trumpet in his hand, and shouted out orders as if calling a huge crew to quarters. The British, who were within easy range, stopped their advance, and, fearing a destructive broadside from the brig's guns, turned and fled precipitately. The "Epervier" continued her course, and reached Savannah in safety on the 1st of May. The "Peacock" reached the same port four days later.

In the very week when the "Peacock" reached port with her prize the new sloop-of-war "Wasp," named after the gallant little brig that had been captured after defeating the "Frolic," slipped through the blockade at Portsmouth and out to sea.

At daylight on the 28th of June, the "Wasp" sighted two merchantmen, and straightway gave chase. Soon a third vessel was discovered on the weather-beam; and, abandoning the vessels first sighted, the American bore down upon the stranger. She proved to be the "Reindeer," a British brig-sloop of eighteen guns, carrying a crew of one hundred and eighteen

men. Although the British vessel was by no means a match in weight of metal for the "Wasp," her captain, William Manners, brought her into action with a cool gallantry which well justified his reputation as one of the bravest men in the British navy.

At ten o'clock in the morning the ships were near enough to each other to exchange signals, but several hours were spent in manœuvring for the weather-gage; so that it was not until after three in the afternoon that the action fairly opened. The day was admirably suitable for a naval battle. Light clouds floated across the sky, and the gentle breeze that was blowing had sufficient strength to propel the ships without careening them. The surface of the ocean was unusually calm for that quarter, in which a rather choppy sea is usually running. Before the light breeze the "Wasp" came down upon her foe, bows on, with her decks cleared for action, and the men at their quarters. On the top-gallant forecastle of the "Reindeer" was mounted a twelve-pound carronade, and the action was opened by the discharge of this piece. In the position she then held the "Wasp" was unable to reply; and her crew had to bear five effective shots from this gun without being able to fire a shot in return,—an ordeal that less well-disciplined crews might not have endured. For nine minutes the Americans returned not a shot; but then the "Wasp" luffed up, firing the guns from aft forward as they bore. The two ships were now lying broadside to broadside, not twenty yards apart, and every shot told. For ten minutes this position was held, and the two crews worked like Furies in loading and firing the great guns. The roar of the cannon was incessant, and the recoil of the heavy explosions deadened what little way the ships had on when fire was opened. Captain Manners was too old an officer not to know, that, in an artillery duel of

that kind, the victory would surely rest with the side that carried the heaviest guns: so he ran his vessel aboard the "Wasp" on the starboard quarter, intending to board and carry the day with the stubborn, dashing gallantry shown by British seamen when once led to an enemy's deck. At the ringing notes of the bugle, calling up the boarders, the British gathered aft, their faces begrimed with gunpowder, their arms bare, and their keen cutlasses firmly clutched in their strong right hands. The Americans took the alarm at once, and crowded forward to repel the enemy. The marines, whose hard duty it is in long-range fighting to stand with military impassiveness, drawn up in line on deck, while the shot whistle by them, and now and then cut great gaps in their straight lines,—the marines came aft, with their muskets loaded and bayonets fixed. Before them were sailors with sharp-pointed boarding-pikes, ready to receive the enemy should he come aboard; while close under the bulwarks were grouped the boarders, ready with cutlass and pistol to beat back the flood of men that should come pouring over the side. The grating of the ships' sides told that the vessels were touching; and the next instant the burly British seamen, looming up like giants, as they dashed through the dense murkiness of the powder-smoke, were among the Americans, cutting and firing right and left. From the deck of the "Reindeer" the marines kept up a constant fire of musketry, to which the sea-soldiers of the "Wasp" responded vigorously. Marksmen posted in the tops of each vessel picked off men from their enemy's decks, choosing generally the officers.

Sharp and bloody though the British attack was, the boarders could make no way against the stubborn stand of the Americans. Captain Manners, seeing his men beaten back, sprang forward to rally them. He

was desperately wounded. A gun-shot had passed through his thighs, and a grape-shot had cut across the calves of his legs; but, maimed and bleeding to death as he was, he leaped into the rigging, and, cheering and waving his sword, called to his men to follow him to the decks of the Yankee. The Britons rallied nobly under the encouragement of their brave captain, and again advanced to the assault. But the figure of the daring officer, as he stood thus before his men, waving his sword and calling on them to come on, caught the eye of one of the men in the "Wasp's" main-top; and the next instant a ball crashed into the captain's brain, and he fell heavily to the deck, with his dying eyes turned upwards toward the flag in whose service he had given his life.

Seeing the British captain fall and the men waver, Captain Blakely with a cheer called up the boarders of the "Wasp"; and in an instant a stream of shouting sailors, cutlass in hand, was pouring over the hammock-nettings, and driving the foe backward on his own decks. The British still fought stubbornly; but their numbers were terribly thinned, and their officers had fallen one by one, until now the captain's clerk was the highest officer left. Seeing his men falling back before the resistless torrent of boarders, this gentleman finally struck the flag; and the battle ended, twenty-seven minutes after the "Reindeer" had fired the opening gun, and eighteen after the "Wasp" had responded.

The execution and damage done on the "Reindeer" by the "Wasp's" shot were appalling. Of her crew of one hundred and eighteen men, thirty-three were killed or fatally wounded, and thirty-four were wounded. The havoc wrought among her officers has already been mentioned. Evidence of the accuracy and skill of the American gunners was to be seen in

the fact that the brig was completely cut to pieces in the line of her ports. Her decks were swept clean of boats, spars, and rigging. Her masts were badly shattered, and her fore-mast soon went by the board. The "Wasp" had suffered severely, but was in much better condition than her captured adversary. Eleven of her crew were killed or mortally wounded, and fifteen were wounded severely or slightly. She had been hulled by six round and many grape-shot, and her fore-mast had been cut by a twenty-four-pound shot. A few hours' work cleared from her decks all trace of the bloody fight, and she was in condition for another action. But it would have been folly to try to get the crippled "Reindeer" to port from that region, swarming with British cruisers: so Captain Blakely took the prisoners on the "Wasp," put a few of the wounded on a neutral vessel that happened to pass, and, burning the prize, made his way to the harbor of l'Orient. He had fought a brave fight, and come out victor after a desperate contest. But, though defeated, the plucky British might well boast of the gallant manner in which they engaged an enemy so much their superior in strength. History nowhere records a more gallant death than that of the British captain, who fell leading his men in a dashing but vain attempt to retrieve the day by boarding. In its manœuvring, in the courage and discipline of the crews, and in the gallantry of the two captains, the action of the "Wasp" and the "Reindeer" may well go down to history as a model naval duel of the age of sails.

After winning this victory the "Wasp" furnished the history of the sea with one of its most mysterious chapters. Heard from but twice again, she vanished from the face of the waters. No wreckage was left to tell the tale; no survivors, or even floating bodies, were ever found to throw light on her disappearance.

The last heard of her was when in mid-ocean she overtook a peaceful Swedish ship, and took aboard two American passengers who preferred to sail under the Stars and Stripes. Thereafter history knew her no more.

* * * * *

Much of the British naval activity in this year of American disaster was centred on the blockade, bombardments, and shore raids. The mildness with which the inhabitants of the New England coast had been treated gave way to severity almost equal to that of Cockburn on the "Chesapeake." From Maine to the mouth of the Connecticut River the people were panic-stricken, and hardly a night passed without the flames of some bonfire kindled by the enemy out of American farm-houses.

Yet, in the main, these operations were of little effect on the progress of the war. They sorely injured peaceable people, but had little effect on the temper of the nation. Sometimes they ended in ridiculous fiascoes, as in the famous bombardment of Stonington.

In August, 1814, Commodore Hardy appeared off that village with a fleet of several vessels, headed by the seventy-four "Ramillies." Casting anchor near shore, he sent to the mayor and selectmen the following curt note: "Not wishing to destroy the unoffending inhabitants residing in the town of Stonington, one hour is granted them, from the receipt of this, to remove out of town." This message naturally caused great consternation; and, while messengers were sent in all directions to call together the militia, the answer was returned to the fleet: "We shall defend the place to the last extremity. Should it be destroyed, we will perish in its ruins." And, having thus defied the enemy, the farmers and fishermen who inhabited the town set about preparing for its defence. The one

battery available for service consisted of two eighteen-pounders and a four-pounder, mounted behind earth breastworks. The gunners were put under the command of an old sailor, who had been impressed into the British navy, where he served four years. The skill he thus acquired in gunnery, he now gladly used against his former oppressors. It was near nightfall when the British opened fire; and they kept up a constant cannonade with round shot, bombs, Congreve rockets, and carcasses until near midnight, without doing the slightest damage. The bursting shells, the fiery rockets, and the carcasses filled with flaming chemicals, fairly filled the little wooden village with fire; but the exertions of the people prevented the spread of the flames. The fleet ceased firing at midnight, but there was no peace for the villagers. Militiamen were pouring in from the country round about, laborers were at work throwing up breastwork, carriers were dashing about in search of ammunition, and all was activity, until, with the first gleam of daylight, the fire of the ships was re-opened. The Americans promptly responded, and soon two eighteen-pound shot hulled the brig "Despatch." For an hour or two a rapid fire was kept up; then, the powder giving out, the Americans spiked their largest gun, and, nailing a flag to the battery flag-staff, went in search of more ammunition. The British did not land; and the Americans, finding six kegs of powder, took the gun to a blacksmith, who drilled out the spike, and the action continued. So vigorous and well directed was the fire of the Americans, that the "Despatch" was forced to slip her cables and make off to a place of safety. That afternoon a truce was declared, which continued until eight the next morning. By that time, the Americans had assembled in sufficient force to defeat any landing party the enemy could send ashore. The bombard-

ment of the town continued; but the aim of the British was so inconceivably poor, that, during the three days' firing, no damage was done by their shot. A more ludicrous fiasco could hardly be imagined, and the Americans were quick to see the comical side of the affair. Before departing, the British fired over fifteen tons of lead and iron into the town. A quantity of this was picked up by the Americans, and offered for sale. In a New York paper appeared the advertisement:

Just received, and offered for sale, about three tons of round shot, consisting of six, nine, twelve, eighteen, twenty-four, and thirty-two pounds; very handsome, being a small proportion of those which were fired from His Britannic Majesty's ships on the unoffending inhabitants of Stonington, in the recent *brilliant* attack on that place. Likewise a few carcasses, in good order, weighing about two hundred pounds each. Apply, etc.

A popular bard of the time set forth in rollicking verse the exploits of the British gunners:

They killed a goose, they killed a hen,
Three hogs they wounded in a pen;
They dashed away,—and pray what then?
That was not taking Stonington.

The shells were thrown, the rockets flew;
But not a shell of all they threw—
Though every house was full in view—
Could burn a house in Stonington.

But the war along the Southern seaboard had nothing farcical about it. The American forces in the Chesapeake and tributary waters consisted of twenty-six gunboats and barges manned by nine hundred men, under the command of Commodore Barney, a veteran of the Revolution. The British had a fleet of ocean-going vessels, varying in numbers from time to time, but always thrice as powerful as Barney's little flotilla.

Several attempts were made by Admiral Cockburn to brush the Americans out of his path—for his eyes were fixed on Washington—but the assailants were always beaten back, or tactically outwitted by the American commander. At last came a determined effort, which ended in the one disgraceful disaster to the American arms during the whole course of the war. It was in May of 1814 that a British expedition of more than five thousand men—composed of regulars, marines, and a few negroes—was carried up the Patuxent, and landed at Benedict, where an armed brig had been stationed to cover the disembarkation. It was early dawn when the signal to land was given, and the river was covered in an instant with a well-manned and warlike flotilla. It was hard work for the British sailors, for a strong current was running; but by three o'clock in the afternoon the whole army was landed, and encamped in a strong position on a hill overlooking the village. Though no American troops were anywhere in the vicinity, the landing was conducted with the utmost caution. As the prow of each boat grated on the sand, the soldiers leaped on the beach, and instantly drew up in line, ready to repel any attack. After the infantry was landed, about a hundred artillerymen followed, and the same number of sailors dragging howitzers.

It is easily understood that this powerful force was not organized solely to destroy Barney's pitiful little flotilla. The real purpose of the British commander was to press on into the interior, and capture Washington, which the Americans had foolishly left without any defences whatever. It came to Barney's ears that Admiral Cockburn had boasted that he would destroy the American flotilla, and dine in Washington the following Sunday. This news the American commodore sent off to the authorities at the capital, and they then

began to make futile preparations to repel the invader. In the meantime the British commenced their march up the shores of the Patuxent, meeting with no opposition. Barney, knowing that the defence of the national capital was of far greater importance than the fate of his flotilla, landed with four hundred men, and hastened to the American lines before Washington. He left the barges under the command of the second lieutenant, Mr. Frazier, with instructions to set fire to every boat on the appearance of the enemy, and then join the commodore with all the men left under his charge. Accordingly, when the invading column reached Nottingham, Mr. Frazier took the flotilla still higher up the creek,—a move that vastly disconcerted the British, who saw their prey eluding them. “But in the main object of our pursuit we were disappointed,” wrote a British officer. “The flotilla which had been stationed opposite to Nottingham retired, on our approach, higher up the stream; and we were consequently in the situation of a huntsman who sees his hounds at fault, and has every reason to apprehend that his game will escape.” But the game never fell into the hands of the ardent hunters; for the next day Mr. Frazier fulfilled his orders by setting fire to every barge, and, after seeing several of the larger boats blow up, mustered his men, and cut across the country, to join his superior officer. The British naval forces soon after reached Pig Point, the scene of this destruction, and there remained; while the land forces immediately turned away from the river, and marched upon Washington.

It is not necessary to give in detail the incidents of the series of skirmishes by which the British fought their way to the American capital. They were opposed by raw militia, and the few sailors and marines under Barney. The former fled with promptitude at

the very first fire, but the sailors and marines fought gallantly. The fighting was sharpest at Bladensburg; and here Barney's blue-jackets won praise from everybody, even from the enemy whose advance they disputed. Barney himself led the Americans, and sighted a favorite gun of the sailors' battery, until he fell desperately wounded. This battery commanded the road by which the main column of British advanced; and by its hail of grape and canister it beat back the advancing regiments, and for some time checked their further progress. The British thereupon opened with rockets, and sent out sharpshooters to pick off the Yankee gunners. One of these riflemen was observed by the Americans to deliberately build for himself a small redoubt of stones from an old wall; and, lying down behind it, he began a deliberate fire upon the Americans. His first bullet went through the cap of one of the sailors, and the second sent a poor fellow to his long account. The marines answered with their muskets; but the fellow's stone rampart saved him, and he continued his fire. Barney vowed to put an end to that affair, and, carefully sighting one of his cannon, pulled the lanyard. The heavy round shot was seen to strike the sharpshooter's defence, and stone and man disappeared in a cloud of dust. Meantime, the enemy had thrown out flanking parties under cover of the woods, and had nearly surrounded the little band of sailors. A musket-ball struck Barney in the thigh, and he began to grow faint with loss of blood; and, finding that the militia had fled, and the sailors were becoming exhausted, the commodore ordered a retreat. The blue-jackets left the field in good order; but their gallant commander had gone but a few steps, when the pain of his wound forced him to lie down under a tree, and await the coming of the enemy. The British soon came up, led by General Ross and Captain

Wainwright of the navy. After learning Barney's rank, and courteously offering to secure surgical aid, the general turned to his companion, and, speaking of the stubborn resistance made by the battery, said, "I told you it was the flotilla men."—"Yes. You were right, though I could not believe you," was the response. "They have given us the only fighting we have had."

Meanwhile, the British, having routed the Americans at every point, pressed on to Washington. The inhabitants fled before them, and the town was almost deserted when the British marched in with banners flying and bands playing. The enemy held the city for only a day; but in that time they did such deeds of vandalism, that even the people and the press of London cried out in indignation. The President's house, the Capitol, all the public buildings except the Patent Office, were burned to the ground. The navy-yard, with the uncompleted ships on the stocks, was likewise burned; but in this the enemy only acted in accordance with the rules of war. It was their destruction of the public buildings, the national archives, and the Congressional library, that aroused the wrathful indignation of all fair-minded people, whether Americans or Europeans. "Willingly," said one London newspaper, "would we throw a veil of oblivion over our transactions at Washington. The Cossacks spared Paris, but we spared not the capital of America." A second English journal fitly denounced the proceedings as "a return to the times of barbarism."

But, if the invaders are rightly to be blamed for the useless vandalism they encouraged, the American authorities are still more culpable for their neglect of the most ordinary precautions of war. That a national capital, close to the sea, should be left virtually unprotected while the enemy was massing his forces only

a few miles away, seems almost unbelievable. But so it was with Washington; for five hundred flotilla men were forced to bear the brunt of the attack of five thousand British. True it is that the military authorities had massed seven thousand militiamen for the defence of the city; but such was the trepidation of these untrained soldiers, that they fled before the main body of the British had come into the fight. That the sailors and marines fought bravely, we have the testimony of the British themselves. Mr. Gleig, a subaltern in the attacking army, writes: "Of the sailors, however, it would be injustice not to speak in the terms which their conduct merits. They were employed as gunners; and not only did they serve their guns with a quickness and precision which astonished their assailants, but they stood till some of them were actually bayoneted with fuses in their hands; nor was it till their leader was wounded and taken, and they saw themselves deserted on all sides by the soldiers, that they quitted the field." Therefore, in the battle of Bladensburg, the blue-jackets won nothing but honor, though the results of the battle were so mortifying to the national pride of the people of the United States.

After this success the British redoubled their marauding operations. There was no longer an American naval force on the Chesapeake to oppose them. Soon their ambitions turned to higher things, and they planned the capture of Baltimore. In this high enterprise they failed, though as the navy had no part in the conflict, the story has no place in this book. The invaders were beaten back by the stubborn defence of Fort McHenry, and sailed away after doing no damage, and having given occasion to Francis Scott Key to write the national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." As by this time about all the damage that could be done on the coasts of the Delaware and

Chesapeake had been accomplished, most of the British force moved southward to take part in the expedition against New Orleans.

Early in December the movement of the British upon New Orleans took definite shape. On the 8th of that month, the calm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, off the Chandeleur Islands, were the scene of a grand rendezvous of British naval and military forces. All the vessels of Cockburn's Chesapeake fleet were there, with other men-of-war, transports, and schooners, to the number of fifty vessels. At the head was the towering two-decker "Tonnant," carrying the Admiral's flag. Frigates, corvettes, and sloops-of-war came trooping in the rear; and the transports bore seven thousand men for the capture of the Southern city. The British were in high good-humor as the anchors were let fall and the ships swung round with their heads to the tide. The voyage across the gulf from the rendezvous at Jamaica had been like a holiday trip. The weather had been fine, and the sea smooth; and the soft air of that semi-tropical region was a never-ending source of delight to sailors who had been suffering the hardships of a Northern station.

The point at which the British fleet had come to anchor lay about fifty miles due east of New Orleans. In that day of sailing-vessels, no enemy could breast the waters of the rolling Mississippi and crush the resistance of the city's defenders, as did Farragut in 1862. Knowing that they could not hope to take their ships up to the levee of the city, the enemy determined to cast anchor near the entrance of Lake Borgne, and send through a chain of lakes and bayous a mammoth expedition in barges, to a point within ten miles of the city. But this well-laid plan had been betrayed to the Americans by Lafitte; and a little band of American sailors, under the command of Lieutenant Catesby

Jones, had taken up a position at the Rigolets, and were prepared to dispute the farther progress of the invading forces. Five gunboats, and one hundred and eighty-five men, constituted the American force, which for a time held the British in check. Finally, the enemy, finding that the swift American cutters could easily evade the lumbering war-vessels, fitted out a fleet of forty-five barges, manned by a thousand veteran British sea-dogs, who had seen service in half a dozen naval wars. The Americans had news of the contemplated attack, and made skilful preparations to meet it. The gunboats were moored in a fore and aft line, at a point near the Rigolets. Their broadsides bore upon the enemy, and the shallowness of the water was such that by no means could they be surrounded. The sailors were prepared for a desperate conflict, and spent the night before the battle in tricing up the boarding-nettings, sharpening cutlasses, and getting small arms in good trim. In the morning the British came on to the attack. It was a long pull from the fleet to the place of battle: so their commander brought his flotilla to anchor just out of range of the American guns; and there the grim old veterans devoured their dinners, and took their rations of grog, with appetites undisturbed by the thought of the coming conflict. Dinner over, the enemy weighed anchor, and dashed forward, with long, swift strokes, into the very flashes of the Americans' cannon. The Americans knew that their one chance of victory was to keep the overwhelming forces of their foe out of boarding distance, and they worked their guns with a rapidity born of desperation. Musket-bullets, grape-shot, and canister poured in a murderous fire upon the advancing boats. But the sturdy old British veterans knew that the best way to stop that fire was to get at the base of it; and they pressed on undauntedly,

responding vigorously, meanwhile, with their bow guns. Soon they were up to the gunwales of the American flotilla, and the grappling-irons were fixed; then, with sharp blows of cutlasses, deadly play of the pikes, and a ceaseless rattle of small arms, they poured upon the decks of the Americans. The boarding-nettings could not long check so furious a foe, and fell before the fierce slash of the cutlasses. The decks once gained, the overpowering numbers of the Englishmen crushed all further resistance; and the flotilla was finally taken, after about one hundred of the enemy and fifty Americans had fallen.

The American flotilla being thus shattered, there remained no further obstacle to prevent the landing of the invading army. Of the advance of that brilliant body of veteran troops over sands and marshes, and through sluggish bayous and canals half-full of stagnant water, until they emerged on the bank of the river, nine miles below New Orleans, it is not my purpose to speak further. Nor does an account of General Jackson's vigorous measures of defence and glorious victory come within the province of this narrative. The interesting story of Jackson's creation of an army from leather-shirted Kentucky riflemen, gay Creoles from the Creole Quarter of the Crescent City, swarthy Spaniards and mulattoes, nondescript desperadoes from the old band of Lafitte, and militia and regulars from all the Southern States, forms no part of the naval annals of the war. It is enough to say that the flower of the British army, led by a veteran of the Peninsula, recoiled before that motley crew of untrained soldiers, and were beaten back, leaving their gallant leader and thousands of their brave men dead upon the field. The navy was not without some share in this glorious triumph. On the 23d of December the schooner "Carolina" dropped down from New Orleans, and opened

fire upon the enemy. "Now, then, for the honor of America, give it to them!" sung out her commander, as the first broadside was fired. The attack, unexpected as it was, created a panic in the British camp. A feeble reply was made with rockets and musketry; but even this was soon discontinued, and the enemy took refuge under the steep bank of the levee, whither the plunging shot could not follow them. All night the "Carolina" kept up her fire; and, when at daybreak she moved away, she left the camp of the enemy in confusion. During the day she renewed the attack, and persisted in her fire until the British threw up a heavy battery on the river's bank, and replied. The lads of the "Carolina" promptly accepted the challenge thus offered, and for a time a spirited combat was maintained. But the battery threw red-hot shot, and the schooner was soon set on fire and destroyed. Meanwhile the corvette "Louisiana" had come down to the scene of action, and in the subsequent engagements did some effective work. When the final onslaught of the British was made, on January 7, 1815, the guns of the "Louisiana" were mounted on the opposite bank of the river, and the practised sailors worked them with deadly effect, until the flight of the American militia on that side exposed the battery to certain capture. The sailors then spiked their guns, and marched off unmolested. The sailors of the "Carolina," on that day of desperate fighting, were in the centre of Jackson's line, between the Creoles and the swarthy Baratarians under Dominique Yon. Here they worked their howitzers, and watched the scarlet lines of the enemy advance and melt away before that deadly blaze; advance and fall back again in hopeless rout. And among the many classes of fighting men whom Jackson had rallied before that British line, none did battle more valiantly for the honor of the

nation and the safety of the flowery city of New Orleans than did those blue-jackets ashore.

It is a fitting commentary upon the folly of war, that the battle of New Orleans was fought after the two warring nations had signed a treaty of peace. The lives of some hundreds of brave Englishmen and Americans were needlessly sacrificed in a cause already decided. Far across the Atlantic Ocean, in the quaint old Dutch city of Ghent, representatives of England and the United States met, and, after some debate, signed the treaty on the 24th of December, 1814. But there was then no Atlantic cable, no "ocean greyhounds" to annihilate space and time; and it was months before the news of the treaty reached the scene of war. In the meantime, the hostilities were continued by land and sea.

CHAPTER XV

"Constitution," "Cyane," and "Levant"—Loss of the "President"
—Captain Reid—The "General Armstrong"—"Peacock" and
"Nautilus"—Close of the War.

THOUGH the treaty of peace had been signed in the last week of 1814, hostilities on the ocean continued for some months. Frigates were cruising far and wide, and no means existed for notifying them of the formal end of the war—indeed, New York and Washington knew nothing of it for more than two months. Among the ships thus cruising, destined to wind up her career with a most glorious victory, was the gallant "Constitution."

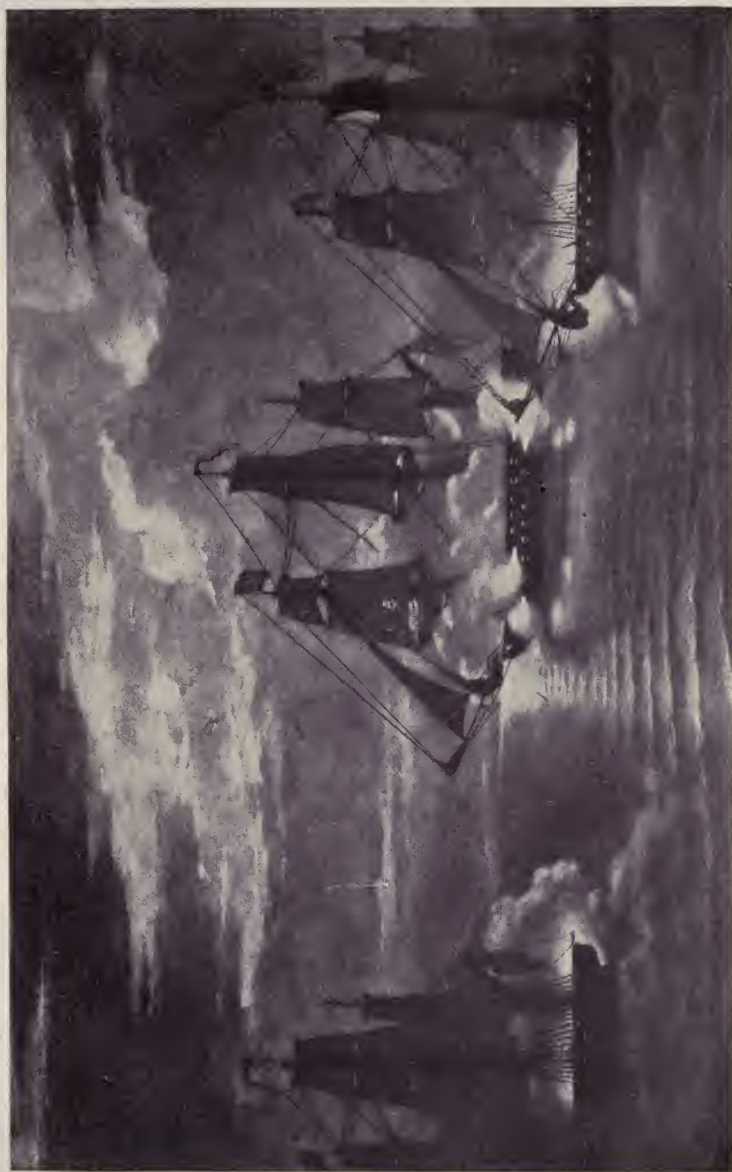
On the morning of the 20th of February, 1815, as the ship was running aimlessly before a light wind, in European waters, some inexplicable impulse led Captain Stewart to suddenly alter his course and run off some sixty miles to the southwest. Again the "Constitution's" good luck seemed to justify the sailors' belief, for at noon she ran into a group of vessels. The first vessel was sighted on the larboard bow, and, as the frigate overhauled her, proved to be a full-rigged ship. Soon after a second sail, also a ship, was sighted; and a few minutes more sufficed to show that both were men-of-war. The one first sighted was the frigate-built corvette "Cyane," of thirty-four guns; and the second was the sloop-of-war "Levant," of twenty-one guns. For either of these vessels singly, the "Constitution," with her fifty-two guns and crew of four hundred and fifty men, was more than a match. Yet to attack the two was a bold movement, and this Stewart determined to undertake. Hardly had the char-

acter of the strangers been made out, when the corvette was seen making signals to the sloop; and the two vessels, then about ten miles apart, made all sail to get together before the enemy should overhaul them. This juncture was precisely what Stewart wished to prevent; and in a trice the shrill notes of the boatswain's whistle sent the sailors in swarms into the rigging, and the frigate was as if by magic clothed with a broad expanse of canvas. Quickly she felt the effect, and bounded through the water after the distant ships like a dolphin chasing a school of flying-fish. The old tars on the forecastle looked knowingly over the side at the foamy water rushing past, and then cast approving glances aloft where every sail was drawing. But their complacency was shattered by a loud crash aloft, which proved to be the main royal-mast which had given way under the strain. Another spar was rigged speedily, and shipped by the active tars, and soon the snowy clouds aloft showed no signs of the wreck. At sundown the three vessels were so near each other that their colors could be seen. Stewart ran up the Stars and Stripes, to which the strangers responded by setting the British flag at their mastheads.

The purpose of the enemy was to delay the opening of the action until night should give him opportunity to manœuvre unobserved; but the "Constitution," suspecting this, pressed forward hotly, and opened fire a few minutes after six o'clock. By skilful seamanship Stewart kept the windward gage of both enemies; and the fight opened with the "Cyane" on the port-quarter, and the "Levant" on the port-bow of the American frigate. Fifteen minutes of fierce cannonading followed, the combatants being within musket-shot most of the time. Every gun was engaged; and the heavy broadsides shook the ships, and thundered far over the placid surface of the ocean, which was now

faintly illumined by the rising moon. The triangular space between the ships was filled with the dense sulphurous smoke of the burning powder; so that the gunners could see nothing of the enemy at whom they were hurling their ponderous iron bolts. The men in the tops could now and again catch a glimpse of the top hamper of the enemy's ships, but those on the gun-deck were working almost at random. After a few minutes of rapid firing, the fire of the enemy slackened; and Stewart directed his gunners to cease until the smoke should have cleared away. At this command a silence, almost oppressive after the heavy cannonading, ensued, broken only by the occasional report of a gun from the unseen enemy, sounding like minute-guns of distress. Anxiously Stewart waited for the smoke to blow away. When it did so, the "Cyane" was seen luffing up, to come under the frigate's stern, and get in a raking broadside. The movement was discovered just in time to be checked. Stewart gave a heavy broadside to the "Levant"; then, bracing back his topsails, backed his ship down abreast of the "Cyane," pouring in rapid broadsides, before which the fire of the corvette died away. Two raking broadsides that crashed into the stern of the "Levant" sent that craft out of the action, to refit. The frigate then pressed down upon the "Cyane," and with a few heavy broadsides forced her to strike.

Captain Douglass of the "Levant" then proved his bravery by standing by his captured consort; although he could have escaped easily, while the "Constitution" was taking possession of her prize. No thought of flight seems to have occurred to the gallant Briton, though he must have known that there was but little hope of his coming out of the combat victorious. Still he boldly came back into the fight, meeting the "Constitution" ploughing along on the opposite tack.



THE "CONSTITUTION" "LEVANT" AND "CYANE"



Broad­sides were exchanged at such close range that the Yankee gunners could hear the ripping of the planks on the enemy's decks as the solid shot crashed through beam and stanchion. Having passed each other, the ships wore, and returned to the attack; but the weight of the American's metal told so severely upon the "Levant" that her flag was hauled down, and, firing a gun to leeward, she gave up the fight.

As an exhibition of seamanship, this action is unrivalled in naval annals. For Stewart to have taken his ship into action with two hostile vessels, and so handle her as not only to escape being raked, but actually rake his enemies, was a triumph of nautical skill. The action was hard fought by both parties. The loss upon the British vessels has never been exactly determined; but it was undoubtedly large, for the hulls were badly cut up by the American's fire. The "Constitution" had but three men killed, and twelve wounded. The officers all escaped unhurt.

After a few hours' pause to repair damages, Stewart took his prizes into Porto Prayo, in the Cape Verde Islands. There he was discovered by a superior British fleet. The "Constitution" and "Cyane" escaped, but the "Levant" remained at anchor, trusting to the neutrality of the port for protection. It was leaning on a broken reed. Not only did the British war-vessel attack instantly, but a hundred or more prisoners who had been paroled and sent ashore, broke their paroles, seized a fort by the harbor side, and turned its guns on the American ship, which was speedily compelled to surrender.

It was late in May before the "Constitution" reached New York. Peace had then been declared; but none the less were Stewart and his men feasted and honored. The old frigate had won for herself

a name ever to be remembered by the people of the nation, in whose service she had received and dealt so many hard knocks. "Old Ironsides," they called her; and even to-day, when a later war has given to the navy vessels whose sides are literally iron, the "Constitution" still holds her place in the hearts of the American people, who think of her lovingly by the well-won title of "Old Ironsides."

Unluckily for the American arms the honor won by the "Constitution" was offset by the loss of the "President" immediately off New York harbor. On the night of the 14th of January she started to run the blockade of that harbor. Her cruise was laid to avoid the blockaders, but, as luck would have it, they had been forced from their accustomed positions by heavy weather and she ran into their midst. Moreover, she grounded and was seriously injured when the enemy was sighted. Before daylight the lookout reported two sail in sight, and at daybreak the ship was fairly surrounded by the enemy's vessels. All at once gave chase to the luckless American; and a few hours were enough to show that her sailing qualities were so seriously injured by her pounding on the bar, that the enemy was rapidly overhauling her. Decatur adopted every known expedient to increase his ship's speed, but to no avail. After she had been lightened by starting the water, cutting away boats and anchors, chopping up and heaving overboard the ponderous cables, together with spars and provisions, the enemy still gained; and the foremost pursuer, a razee, opened fire. The "President" responded with her stern-chasers, but her shot had no effect. "It is said that on this occasion," writes Cooper, "the shot of the American ship were observed to be thrown with a momentum so unusually small, as to have since excited much distrust of the quality of her gunpowder. It is even added, that many

of these shot were distinctly seen, when clear of the smoke, until they struck." At six o'clock in the evening, the frigate "Endymion" led the British squadron in chase, and had gained a position so close upon the American's beam that her broadsides were rapidly crippling the fugitive. Thereupon Decatur determined upon a desperate expedient, that sounds like some of his reckless exploits in the war with Tripoli. His plan was to bring the "President" about, and run boldly alongside the enemy. Everything was to be sacrificed to the end of getting to close quarters. When once the two ships had grappled, the Americans were to board, carry the British ship in a hand-to-hand battle, and then, abandoning the crippled "President," escape in the captured frigate. So desperate a plan needed the cordial co-operation of every man: so it was first presented to the commissioned officers, who gladly embraced the desperate project. The sailors were then sent aft, and Decatur addressed them from the quarter-deck.

"My lads," said he, "that ship is coming up with us. As our ship won't sail, we'll go on board of theirs, every man and boy of us, and carry her into New York. All I ask of you is to follow me. This is a favorite ship of the country. If we allow her to be taken, we shall be deserted by our wives and sweethearts. What, let such a ship as this go for nothing! 'Twould break the heart of every pretty girl in New York."

With hearty cheers, the jackies returned to their guns. All were ready for the coming struggle. Over the main hatch was mounted a howitzer, with its black muzzle peering down into the hold, ready to scuttle the ship when the boarders should spring upon the enemy's deck. The sun, by this time, had sunk below the horizon, and the darkness of night was gathering

over the ocean. The two ships surged toward each other,—great black masses, lighted up on either side by rows of open ports, through which gleamed the uncertain light of the battle-lanterns. On the gun-deck the men stood stern and silent; their thoughts fixed upon the coming battle, or perhaps wandering back to the green fields and pleasant homes they had so recently left, perhaps forever. The gray old yeoman of the frigate, with his mates, walked from gun to gun, silently placing a well-sharpened cutlass, a dirk, and a heavy leather boarding-cap at each man's side. The marines were drawn up in a line amidships; their erect, soldierly air and rigid alignment contrasting with the careless slouchiness of the sailors. Butts for the sailors' ridicule as they were during a cruise, the marines knew that, in hand-to-hand conflicts, their part was as dashing as that of their tormentors of the fore-castle.

When the "President" had come within a quarter of a mile of her adversary, Decatur perceived that his enemy was determined to decide the contest at long range. As the "President" hauled down nearer, the "Endymion" sheered off, keeping up meanwhile a vigorous cannonade. To this the Americans responded in kind; and so much superior was the gunnery of the Yankee tars, that the rigging of the enemy was seen to be fast going to pieces, while her guns were being silenced one by one. But her fire did sad havoc among the men of the "President," and particularly among the officers. The first broadside carried away Decatur's first lieutenant, Mr. Babbitt, who was struck by a thirty-two-pound shot, which cut off his right leg below the knee, and hurled him through the ward-room hatch to the deck below, fracturing his wounded leg in two places. Shortly after, Decatur was knocked to the deck by a heavy splinter. For some time he lay

unconscious; then opening his eyes, and seeing a throng of anxious seamen about him, he ordered them to their stations, and resumed his duties. The fire of the "Endymion" then slackened; and she lay upon the water, with her sails cut from the yards. At that moment Lieutenant Howell turned to a midshipman standing at his side, and said gaily, "Well, we have whipped that ship, at any rate." A flash from the bow of the Englishman followed; and he added, "No, there she is again." The midshipman turned to reply, and saw Howell stretched dead at his feet, killed by the last shot of the battle.

The enemy was now helpless, and it would have been easy enough for the "President" to choose her position and compel her adversary to strike; but the presence of two more Englishmen, rapidly coming up astern, forced the Americans to abandon their prey and continue their flight. It was then late in the evening, and the night was dark and starless. Every light was extinguished on the American frigate, in the hope that by so doing she might slip away under cover of the night. But the British lookouts were sharp-eyed; and by eleven o'clock two frigates had closed in on the crippled ship, and a third was rapidly coming up astern. All were pouring in rapid broadsides, and the dark waters were lighted up like a fiery sea by the ceaseless flashing of the guns. Thus surrounded and overpowered, there remained open to the Americans no course but to surrender; and at eleven o'clock at night the "President" made signal that she had struck. Her fate, like that of the "Chesapeake," had accorded with the superstitious sailor's notion that she was an "unlucky" ship.

One other action of this year of war after peace was declared must be passed over with a mere mention. The little "Hornet," always a lucky ship, under com-

mand of Captain Biddle, took the brig "Penguin" after a fierce and bloody conflict. This was the last prize of the war.

* * * * *

While the operations of the privateers during the War of 1812 were full of daring and of picturesque incident, I have foreborne to tell of it here. That story would be a volume in itself. But one fight of a private armed vessel had so great an influence upon the final outcome of the war that its story becomes pertinent.

On the 26th of September, 1814, the privateer, "General Armstrong," Captain Samuel C. Reid, was lying at anchor in the roadstead of Fayal. Over the land that inclosed the snug harbor on three sides waved the flag of Portugal, a neutral power, but unfortunately one of insufficient strength to enforce the rights of neutrality. While the "Armstrong" was thus lying in the port, a British squadron, composed of the "Plantagenet," seventy-four; the "Rota," thirty-eight; and "Carnation," eighteen, hove in sight, and soon swung into the harbor and dropped anchor. Reid watched the movements of the enemy with eager vigilance. He knew well that the protection of Portugal would not aid him in the least should the captain of that seventy-four choose to open fire upon the "Armstrong." The action of the British in coming into the harbor was in itself suspicious, and the American had little doubt that the safety of his vessel was in jeopardy. While he was pacing the deck, and weighing in his mind the probability of an assault by the British, he caught sight of some unusual stir aboard the hostile ships. It was night; but the moon had risen, and by its pale light Reid saw four large barges let fall from the enemy's ships, and, manned by about forty men each, make

toward his vessel. In an instant every man on the privateer was called to his post. That there was to be an attack was now certain; and the Americans determined not to give up their vessel without at least a vigorous attempt to defend her. Reid's first act was to warp his craft under the guns of a rather dilapidated castle, which was supposed to uphold the authority of Portugal over the island and adjacent waters. Hardly had the position been gained, when the foremost of the British boats came within hail, and Captain Reid shouted, "Boat ahoy! What boat's that?" No response followed the hail; and it was repeated, with the warning, "Answer, or I shall fire into you." Still the British advanced without responding; and Reid, firmly convinced that they purposed to carry his ship with a sudden dash, ordered his gunners to open on the boats with grape. This was done, and at the first volley the British turned and made off. Captain Reid then warped his vessel still nearer shore; and bending springs on her cable, so that her broadside might be kept always toward the enemy, he waited a second attack. At midnight the enemy were seen advancing again, this time with fourteen barges and about five hundred men. While the flotilla was still at long range, the Americans opened fire upon them with the heavy "Long Tom"; and, as they came nearer, the full battery of long nine-pounders took up the fight. The carnage in the advancing boats was terrible; but the plucky Englishmen pushed on, meeting the privateer's fire with volleys of musketry and carronades. Despite the American fire, the British succeeded in getting under the bow and quarter of the "Armstrong," and strove manfully to board; while the Americans fought no less bravely to keep them back. The attack became a furious hand-to-hand battle. From behind the boarding-nettings the Americans thrust pikes, and fired pistols

and muskets, at their assailants, who, mounted on each other's shoulders, were hacking fiercely at the nettings which kept them from gaining the schooner's deck. The few that managed to clamber on the taffrail of the "Armstrong" were thrust through and through with pikes, and hurled, thus horribly impaled, into the sea. The fighting was fiercest and deadliest on the quarter; for there were most of the enemy's boats, and there Captain Reid led the defence in person. So hot was the reception met by the British at this point, that they drew off in dismay, despairing of ever gaining the privateer's deck. Hardly did Reid see the enemy thus foiled on the quarter, when a chorus of British cheers from the forecastle, mingled with yells of rage, told that the enemy had succeeded in effecting a lodgment there. Calling his men about him, the gallant captain dashed forward and was soon in the front rank of the defenders, dealing furious blows with his cutlass, and crying out, "Come on, my lads, and we'll drive them into the sea." The leadership of an officer was all that the sailors needed. The three lieutenants on the forecastle had been killed or disabled, else the enemy had never come aboard. With Reid to cheer them on, the sailors rallied, and with a steady advance drove the British back into their boats. The disheartened enemy did not return to the attack, but returned to their ships, leaving behind two boats captured and two sunk. Their loss in the attack was thirty-four killed and eighty-six wounded. On the privateer were two killed and seven wounded.

But the attack was not to end here. Reid was too old a sailor to expect that the British, chagrined as they were by two repulses, were likely to leave the privateer in peace. He well knew that the withdrawal of the barges meant not an abandonment, but merely a short discontinuance, of the attack. Accordingly he

gave his crew scarcely time to rest, before he set them to work getting the schooner in trim for another battle. The wounded were carried below, and the decks cleared of splinters and wreckage. The boarding-nettings were patched up, and hung again in place. "Long Tom" had been knocked off his carriage by a carronade shot, and had to be remounted; but all was done quickly, and by morning the vessel was ready for whatever might be in store for her. The third assault was made soon after daybreak. Evidently the enemy despaired of his ability to conquer the privateersmen in a hand-to-hand battle; for this time he moved the brig "Carnation" up within range, and opened fire upon the schooner. The man-of-war could fire nine guns at a broadside, while the schooner could reply with but seven; but "Long Tom" proved the salvation of the privateer. The heavy twenty-four-pound shots from this gun did so much damage upon the hull of the brig, that she was forced to draw out of the action; leaving the victory, for the third time, with the Americans.

But now Captain Reid decided that it was folly to longer continue the conflict. The overwhelming force of the enemy made any thought of ultimate escape folly. It only remained for the British to move the seventy-four "Plantagenet" into action to seal the doom of the Yankee privateer. The gallant defence already made by the Americans had cost the British nearly three hundred men in killed and wounded; and Reid now determined to destroy his vessel, and escape to the shore. The great pivot-gun was accordingly pointed down the main hatch, and two heavy shots sent crashing through the bottom. Then applying the torch, to make certain the work of destruction, the privateersmen left the ship, giving three cheers for the gallant "General Armstrong," as a burst of flame

and a roar told that the flames had reached her magazine.

This gallant action won loud plaudits for Captain Reid when the news reached the United States. Certainly no vessel of the regular navy was ever more bravely or skilfully defended than was the "General Armstrong." But, besides the credit won for the American arms, Reid had unknowingly done his country a memorable service. The three vessels that attacked him were bound to the Gulf of Mexico, to assist in the attack upon New Orleans. The havoc Reid wrought among their crews, and the damage he inflicted upon the "Carnation," so delayed the New Orleans expedition, that General Jackson was able to gather those motley troops that fought so well on the plains of Chalmette. Had it not been for the plucky fight of the lads of the "General Armstrong," the British forces would have reached New Orleans ten days earlier, and Packenham's expedition might have ended very differently.

The war was now virtually at an end. Its last action was a foolish and a useless one. The sloop "Peacock," returning to New York, fell in with the British brig "Nautilus" and prepared to give it action. The captain of the latter knew of the declaration of peace and shouted the intelligence to Captain Warrington of the American ship, who thought it a subterfuge and opened fire. The "Nautilus" was badly cut up, and eight of her crew killed, before she struck. When Warrington boarded he found his foe had told the truth. Of course there were profuse apologies and expressions of regret, but the cruel mischief had been done.

When the "Peacock" reached port, the last of the cruisers had returned; and the war was over in fact, as it had long been over technically. It has become the



By courtesy of Hon. Theo. Sutro

THE BRIG "ARMSTRONG" ENGAGING THE BRITISH FLEET
(In the Harbor of Fayal, September 26, 1814)

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fashion to say that it was a useless war, that served no purpose, because the treaty by which it was ended contained no reference to the hateful doctrine of the right to search, which, more than anything else, had brought on the conflict. Yet, though the conduct of the war had not led the British formally to renounce their claims in this respect, the exploits of the American navy had shown that the Yankee blue-jackets were prepared to, and would, forcibly resent any attempt on the part of the British to put those claims into practice. The British had entered upon the war gaily, never dreaming that the puny American navy would offer any serious resistance to Great Britain's domination upon the ocean. Yet now, looking back over the three years of the war, they saw an array of naval battles, in the majority of which the Americans had been victorious; and in all of which the brilliancy of American naval tactics, the skill of the officers, and the courage and discipline of the crews, put the younger combatants on a plane with the older and more famous naval service. Fenimore Cooper, in his "History of the Navy of the United States," thus sums up the results of this naval war: "The navy came out of this struggle with a vast increase of reputation. The brilliant style in which the ships had been carried into action, the steadiness and accuracy with which they had been handled, and the fatal accuracy of their fire on nearly every occasion had produced a new era in naval warfare. Most of the frigate actions had been as soon decided as circumstances would at all allow; and in no instance was it found necessary to keep up the fire of a sloop-of-war an hour, when singly engaged. Most of the combats of the latter, indeed, were decided in about half that time. The execution done in these short conflicts was often equal to that made by the largest vessels of Europe in general actions; and, in some of them,

the slain and wounded comprised a very large proportion of their crews. . . . The ablest and bravest captains of the English fleet were ready to admit that a new power was about to appear upon the ocean, and that it was not improbable the battle for the mastery of the seas would have to be fought over again."

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